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University History Series
Department of History at Berkeley

Kenneth M. Stampp

HISTORIAN OF SLAVERY, THE CIVIL WAR, AND RECONSTRUCTION,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, 1946-1983

With an Introduction by
John G. Sproat

Interviews Conducted by
Ann Lage
in 1996

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

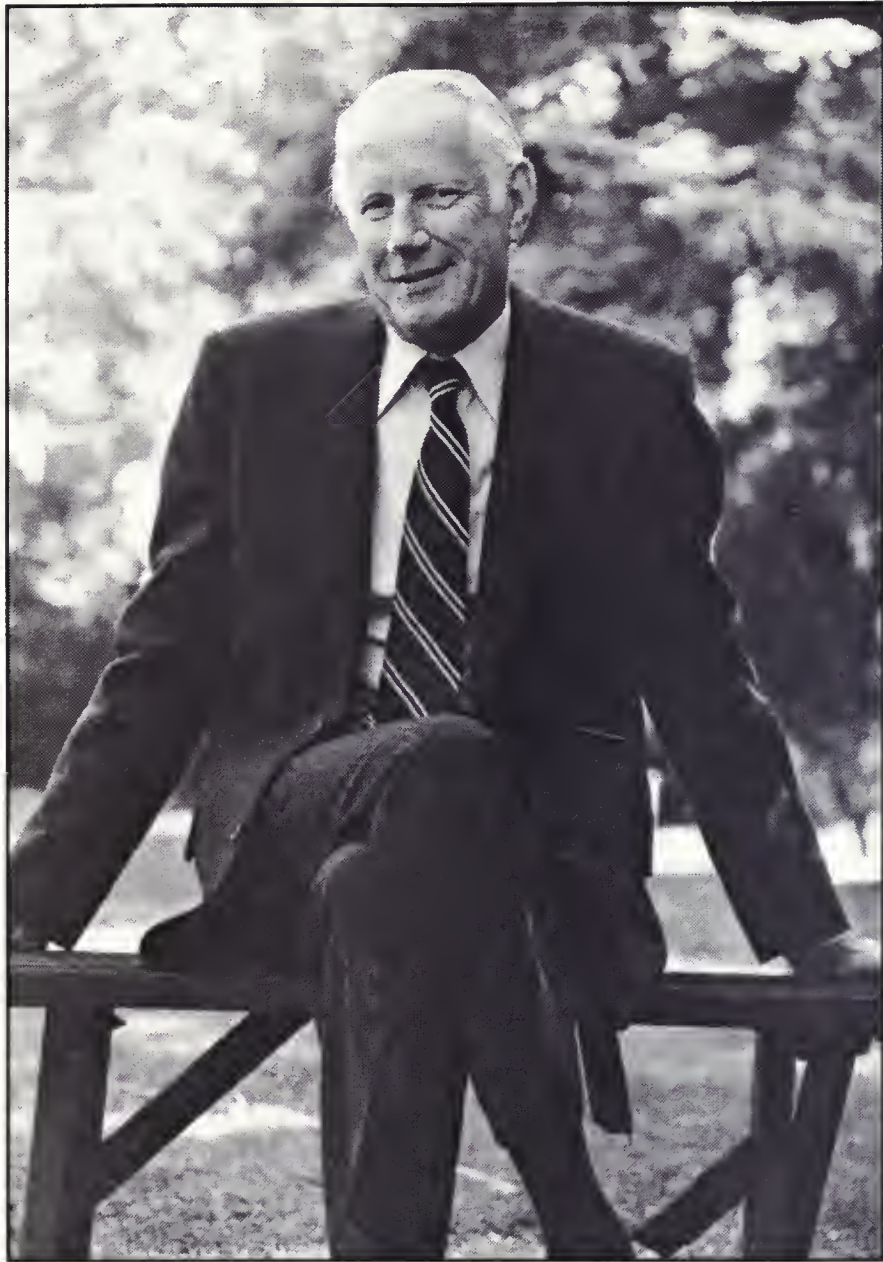
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Kenneth M. Stampp, 1980s.

Cataloguing information

Kenneth M. Stamp (b. 1912)

Professor of History

Historian of Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1983. 1998, x, 313 pp.

Family and youth in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; studies in history at University of Wisconsin: radical politics of the 1930s, pacifism, graduate studies with Professor William Hesselstine, influence of historian Charles Beard; teaching during World War II at the University of Arkansas and University of Maryland, colleagues Richard Hofstadter and C. Wright Mills; professor of history at Berkeley, 1946-1983: departmental governance, faculty hiring and promotions, affirmative action efforts, loyalty oath controversy; issues of civil rights and civil liberties at UC: reflections on Free Speech Movement and anti-war protests of 1960s-1970s; research, writing, and teaching on slavery, the American Civil War, and Reconstruction; reflections on historiography and changing interpretations of the past.

Introduction by John G. Sproat, Professor Emeritus of History, University of South Carolina.

Interviewed 1996 by Ann Lage for the Department of History at Berkeley series.

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PREFACE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AT BERKELEY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

The Department of History at Berkeley oral history series grew out of Gene Brucker's (Professor of History, 1954-1991) 1995 Faculty Research Lecture on "History at Berkeley." In developing his lecture on the transformations in the UC Berkeley Department of History in the latter half of the twentieth century, Brucker, whose tenure as professor of history from 1954 to 1991 spanned most of this period, realized how much of the story was undocumented.

Discussion with Carroll Brentano (M.A. History, 1951, Ph.D. History, 1967), coordinator of the University History Project at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, history department faculty wife, and a former graduate student in history, reinforced his perception that a great deal of the history of the University and its academic culture was not preserved for future generations. The Department of History, where one might expect to find an abiding interest in preserving a historical record, had discarded years of departmental files, and only a fraction of history faculty members had placed their personal papers in the Bancroft Library.¹

Moreover, many of the most interesting aspects of the history--the life experiences, cultural context, and personal perceptions--were only infrequently committed to paper.² They existed for the most part in the memories of the participants.

Carroll Brentano knew of the longtime work of the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) in recording and preserving the memories of participants in the history of California and the West and the special interest of ROHO in the history of the University. She and Gene Brucker then undertook to involve Ann Lage, a ROHO interviewer/editor who had conducted a number of oral histories in the University History Series and was herself a product of Berkeley's history department (B.A. 1963, M.A. 1965). In the course of a series of mutually enjoyable luncheon

¹The Bancroft Library holds papers from history professors Walton Bean, Woodbridge Bingham, Herbert Bolton, Woodrow Borah, George Guttridge, John Hicks, Joseph Levenson, Henry May, William Alfred Morris, Frederic Paxson, Herbert Priestley, Engel Sluiter, Raymond Sontag.

²Two published memoirs recall the Berkeley history department: John D. Hicks, *My Life with History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968) recalls his years as professor and dean, 1942-1957; Henry F. May reflects on his years as an undergraduate at Berkeley in the thirties in *Coming to Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

meetings, the project to document the history of the Department of History at Berkeley evolved.

In initial discussions about the parameters of the project, during which the varied and interesting lives of the history faculty were considered, a crucial decision was made. Rather than conduct a larger set of short oral histories focussed on topics limited to departmental history, we determined to work with selected members of the department to conduct more lengthy biographical memoirs. We would record relevant personal background--family, education, career choices, marriage and children, travel and avocations; discuss other institutional affiliations; explore the process of creating their historical works; obtain reflections on their retirement years. A central topic for each would be, of course, the Department of History at Berkeley--its governance, the informal and formal relationships among colleagues, the connections with the broader campus, and curriculum and teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

Using the Brucker lecture as a point of departure, it was decided to begin to document the group of professors who came to the department in the immediate postwar years, the 1950s, and the early 1960s. Now retired, the younger ones somewhat prematurely because of a university retirement incentive offer in the early nineties, this group was the one whose distinguished teaching and publications initially earned the Department of History its high national rating. They made the crucial hiring and promotion decisions that cemented the department's strength and expanded and adapted the curriculum to meet new academic interests.

At the same time, they participated in campus governing bodies as the university dealt with central social, political, and cultural issues of our times, including challenges to civil liberties and academic freedom, the response to tumultuous student protests over free speech, civil rights and the Vietnam War, and the demands for equality of opportunity for women and minorities. And they benefitted from the postwar years of demographic and economic growth in California accompanied for the most part through the 1980s with expanding budgets for higher education. Clearly, comprehensive oral histories discussing the lives and work of this group of professors would produce narratives of interest to researchers studying the developments in the discipline of history, higher education in the modern research university, and postwar California, as well as the institutional history of the University of California.

Carroll Brentano and Gene Brucker committed themselves to facilitate the funding of the oral history project, as well as to enlist the interest of potential memoirists in participating in the process. Many members of the department responded with interest, joined the periodic lunch confabs, offered advice in planning, and helped find funding to support the project. In the spring of 1996, the interest of

the department in its own history led to an afternoon symposium, organized by Brentano and Professor of History Sheldon Rothblatt and titled "Play It Again, Sam." There, Gene Brucker restaged his Faculty Research Lecture. Professor Henry F. May responded with his own perceptions of events, followed by comments on the Brucker and May theses from other history faculty, all videotaped for posterity and the Bancroft Library.¹

Meanwhile, the oral history project got underway with interviews with Delmer Brown, professor of Japanese history; Nicholas Riasanovsky, Russian and European intellectual history; and Kenneth Stamp, American history. A previously conducted oral history with Woodrow Borah, Latin American history, was uncovered and placed in The Bancroft Library. An oral history with Carl Schorske, European intellectual history, is in process at the time of this writing, and more are in the works. The selection of memoirists for the project is determined not only by the high regard in which they are held by their colleagues, because that would surely overwhelm us with candidates, but also by their willingness to commit the substantial amount of time and thought to the oral history process. Age, availability of funding, and some attention to a balance in historical specialties also play a role in the selection order.

The enthusiastic response of early readers has reaffirmed for the organizers of this project that departmental histories and personal memoirs are essential to the unraveling of some knotty puzzles: What kind of a place is this University of California, Berkeley, to which we have committed much of our lives? What is this academic culture in which we are enmeshed? And what is this enterprise History, in which we all engage? As one of the project instigators reflected, "Knowing what was is essential; and as historians we know the value of sources, even if they are ourselves." The beginnings are here in these oral histories.

Carroll Brentano, Coordinator
University History Project
Center for Studies in Higher Education

Gene Brucker
Shepard Professor of History Emeritus

Ann Lage, Principal Editor
Regional Oral History Office

¹The Brucker lecture and May response, with an afterword by David Hollinger, are published in *History at Berkeley: A Dialog in Three Parts* (Chapters in the History of the University of California, Number Seven), Carroll Brentano and Sheldon Rothblatt, editors [Center for Studies in Higher Education and Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1998].

INTRODUCTION by John G. Sproat

When I was invited in 1974 to become chair of the Department of History at the University of South Carolina, Kenneth Stamp was at once astonished, delighted, and skeptical. A "Stamp student" from Yankeeland recruited to a pivotal intellectual position in a bastion of the Old South? Clearly, something profound had to be happening in South Carolina for its citizens even to consider such an improbable coupling. What Ken did not as yet perhaps fully appreciate was that the "profound happening" in the Palmetto State and the rest of the South owed much to his own brilliant scholarship about the region's history, race relations, and social structure.

Ken was not the only one astonished and skeptical about my new position. Many of South Carolina's good citizens could not quite believe that I had developed my scholarly interest in their region from a Wisconsin-born Yankee teaching at a university perched in the hills overlooking San Francisco Bay! But the South of 1974 was truly undergoing profound change, emerging at last from its long ordeal of legally mandated segregation. Even such an anchorage of traditional ways as South Carolina was giving way to forces of modernism in race relations, politics, and education, and the fact that a "Yankee" from California should find a congenial new home at its state university was persuasive evidence of the emergence of a "new order."

Underlying this remarkable change was the work of a new generation of scholars concerned with the history and sociology of the South and of African America. None of them was more influential than Kenneth Stamp. Indeed, his "signature book" *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* quickly became a latter-day supplement to Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* as an intellectual trigger for one of the most momentous social revolutions in American history. Within a few years of its appearance, the book became the generally accepted account of slavery, and the paperback edition found its way into classrooms throughout the nation, even the Deep South. Its success derived in great part from its literary craftsmanship: it was history written in clear, crisp prose, restrained in tone on matters of emotional controversy, imaginative and energetic in its challenges to conventional wisdom. But it was also in complete accord with the changing temper of the times in questions of race and civil rights, and it is fair to say that it helped immensely to change the racial perceptions of a generation of young Americans. Together with his next work, *The Era of Reconstruction*, it also contributed to a new and more rational perspective among opinion makers and general readers about the whole nature and legacy of the mid-nineteenth century sectional conflict. Not ordinarily given to publicizing the work of professional historians, *Time* magazine accorded the latter work an extended review article, in

effect acknowledging that historians like Stampp had much to tell the American people about why they were just then in the midst of a civil rights revolution.

Ken Stampp's major works on the sectional conflict also heralded the emergence of the University of California as a major center for the study of southern history and a "threshold institution" for examining the roles of race and ethnicity in American life. For many aspiring young historians, Berkeley and Kenneth Stampp became synonymous, and his graduate courses and seminars on the Civil War, Reconstruction, and The New Nation over the ensuing three decades attracted acolytes from throughout the country. While many of them went on from their years at Berkeley to become accomplished scholar-teachers in their own right, they all still pride themselves on being "Stampp students." Yet, like the mentor who trained them, they are too independent themselves to ever comprise a distinctive "Stampp school" of history. It is enough that they follow his lead in investigating controversial topics with a scholarship that is at once disciplined and imaginative and that shares his regard for high standards.

For the vast majority of Berkeley students whose lives Ken Stampp touched, of course, it is as a teacher of American history that he is best remembered. And with good reason: I have never known a teacher whose classroom presentations were more beautifully organized and controlled, more literate and logical, more eloquently understated, and more appealing to the common sense of students. Whether lecturing before hundreds of restless academic novices in cavernous Wheeler Auditorium or to upper-division students in his courses on sectional conflict, or supervising a dozen separate scholarly inquiries in seminar, his "presence" uniformly reflected a deep respect for the discipline of history and a delight in teaching.

Beyond his own scholarship and training of students at the university, Ken played a more prosaic yet central role in building the Department of History into one of the very finest in the nation. By his own role model and skill at identifying excellence in others, he helped the department attract promising young scholar-teachers to its ranks, then offered his good advice and assistance in their development into skilled practitioners of their art. Never a department chair, he was nonetheless an indispensable stalwart among his colleagues.

But there are other Kenneth Stampes, as well: the one who loves opera to the point, I believe, that he could sit through three consecutive performances of "The Ring" and yet ask for more; the one who relishes fine wines and had the prescience, years ago, to lay in a good stock of Chateau Petrus before the price went off the boards; the one who appreciates an evening of exceptional food and good company, whether at home or in an elegant restaurant; the traveler who enjoys long walks along Alpine paths or in any countryside. He has had his share of

life's difficulties and sadnesses, to be sure; yet he weathers adversity with reasonable tolerance and, as in his professional work, there is always about him a sense of solid and reassuring predictability.

In the long and intimate association of Kenneth Stamp and Berkeley there is a certain gentle irony, for he did not really want to come to the university when it offered him an instructorship in 1946. On the faculty of the University of Maryland at the time, he had ready access to the archival and library resources of the nation's capital, a "fringe benefit" of immense value to an aspiring young American historian. Moreover, he knew nothing about California and had even to consult an atlas to learn just where Berkeley was. After prolonged negotiations, Berkeley finally "upped" the proffered rank to assistant professor and Ken said yes, although still with some reluctance. Convinced that he would not stay long, he moved west--and promptly fell in love with the Bay Area and his new university. Happily, the felicitous mutual attraction continues to this day.

John G. Sproat
Professor Emeritus of History
University of South Carolina

September 1, 1997
Columbia, South Carolina

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Kenneth M. Stamp

Kenneth M. Stamp, professor emeritus of American history at Berkeley, was a logical choice for inclusion in the new series of oral histories on the Department of History at Berkeley. He joined the department in 1946, when Berkeley was a quiet and somewhat provincial town and campus, and the department's faculty in American history was still dominated by a Herbert Bolton/History of the Americas orientation. For the next thirty-seven years, he participated in or observed all of the events and transformations in the department and on the campus that this series has proposed to document. In addition, he is a masterful historian of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, who has written widely influential books and whose writing and teaching still inspire his successors in the department, and their students in turn.

When his colleagues proposed the idea of undertaking an oral history, in the fall of 1995, Professor Stamp was receptive. Meeting at lunch at the Faculty Club with project advisors Carroll Brentano, Gene Brucker, and Irv Scheiner, and his prospective interviewer, he expressed some skepticism about the enterprise, having learned from research in the Federal Writers' Project slave narratives how unreliable the memory of distant events could be. We assured him that the transcribed oral history would be presented with the caveat that it provided a personal perspective, not the final, verified record of events. We were hoping, through this series, to enable future scholars to assemble from many parts and varying perspectives, in concert with written documents, some sense of the life of the university and the discipline of history.

A starting point for my research in preparing for the interviews was the essay by former student John Sproat on Stamp in *Twentieth-Century American Historians*.¹ Leon Litwack, another former student, now his successor as Morrison Professor of History at Berkeley, spoke with me about Stamp's intellectual roots, his work as a teacher and scholar, and his commitment to civil liberties, civil rights, and academic freedom issues. Project advisors helped clarify his role in departmental affairs, which was considerable even though he never served as department chair. (He was acting chair in 1959-1960.) And, of course, his major works and journal articles were ready sources of themes for the oral history.

Shortly before the interviewing was scheduled to begin, Ken Stamp's beloved wife, Isabel, died, on March 8, 1996. It was a

¹Vol. 17, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Clyde N. Wilson, ed. [Brucoli-Clark/Gale Research Company, 1983].

difficult time for him, but he wanted to go on with the project; perhaps this retrospective look at his life and work was timely. Interviewing began on April 4, 1996, in the study of his home in the Berkeley hills, our mutual efforts closely watched by his curious poodle and the bust of Abraham Lincoln (given to Stampf as a winner of the Lincoln Prize in 1993). We met every week or two until June 4, then again on July 9, 1996, for a total of eighteen recorded hours. The following year, on January 21, 1997, we met again to recoup the material lost when my tape recorder malfunctioned during an early session.

The transcripts of the recorded sessions were lightly edited by Regional Oral History Office editorial assistant Mary Mead and sent to Professor Stampf for his review. He clarified inaudible passages and unclear references and removed a few remarks that he considered too personal or too strongly worded. For a writer widely admired for his literary craftsmanship, he was admirably restrained about "cleaning up" the conversational language of the interview situation. As a careful historian, he reiterated that he had not checked the facts against written records; this account is based solely on his best recollection of events.

Kenneth Stampf has written and reflected on how the life and times of a historian influences his work. In a 1983 lecture, "Interpreting History," he notes that historical interpretation is derived from the fragmentary evidence, and also "from the various subjective influences to which every historian is exposed. . . [It is] derived as well from the circumstances and experiences of his own life, for they help to determine the way in which he will view the past and what meaning it will have for him. It may be true that understanding the past helps us to understand the present, but I believe that it is also true that the time in which a historian lives conditions his understanding of the past."¹ Here in his oral history is a much fuller, if less formal, account than he was able to give in that lecture of the circumstances of his own life and his response to the historical events of his times. The personal and historical context coupled with discussions of his major historical works--how he came to choose his topics, the research and writing process, the critical response, and his retrospective thoughts--make this volume a wonderful resource for understanding the work of the historian.

It is also a rich resource for scholars in many other respects. Despite his misgivings about the accuracy of oral accounts, Ken Stampf recalls very well key decisions and the personal and political

¹ The 7th Annual O. Meredith Wilson Lecture in History, delivered at the University of Utah, March 30, 1983 [published by the Department of History, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah]. A copy of "Interpreting History" was given to The Bancroft Library by Ken Stampf.

interactions that shaped the Berkeley history department during his years here. His account gives additional documentation of the loyalty oath controversy, 1949-1952; efforts to open the campus to political speakers of every persuasion in the fifties and sixties; and faculty reactions to the Free Speech Movement, 1964-1965, and the subsequent decade of student unrest.

He gives similarly insightful accounts of his years as a student at the University of Wisconsin in the 1930s, his brief appointment at the University of Arkansas in 1941-1942, and teaching and research at the University of Maryland during World War II, where his colleagues and close friends included historian Richard Hofstadter and sociologist C. Wright Mills. He also describes his experiences as Harmsworth Professor at Oxford University in 1961-1962, where he met and married Isabel.

The Regional Oral History Office, on behalf of future scholars, would like to thank Leon F. Litwack for making this oral history possible with support from his Morrison chair research funds. We also thank John Sproat for his elegant introduction. Thanks are again due Carroll Brentano and Gene Brucker for having the inspiration for this series on the history of the Department of History and for their persistent efforts to make it a reality. The greatest thanks, of course, are to Professor Stamp, for his willingness to devote the time and thought to recording his oral history.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. A major focus of the office since its inception has been university history. The series list of completed oral histories documenting the history of the University of California is included in this volume. The Regional Oral History Office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Willa K. Baum.

Ann Lage
Interviewer/Editor

Berkeley, California
January 1998

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Kenneth M. Stampp

Date of birth July 12, 1912 Birthplace Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Father's full name Oscar M. Stampp

Occupation Chiropractor Birthplace Milwaukee

Mother's full name Eleanor v. Schmidt

Occupation Mother, housewife Birthplace Milwaukee

Your spouse Isabel M. Stampp (deceased)

Wife, mother, medical social
Occupation worker, critic, etc. Birthplace Malton, England

Your children Kenneth Mitchell, Sara Katherine, Jennifer Elizabeth, Michele Susan

Where did you grow up? Milwaukee

Present community Berkeley, California

Education B.A., M.A. Ph.D. University of Wisconsin, Madison

Occupation(s) Professor emeritus

Areas of expertise Nineteenth-century American history.

Other interests or activities Reading, travel, music.

Organizations in which you are active Various historical societies.

I PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION

[Interview 1: April 4, 1996] ##¹

Family and Early Childhood in Milwaukee

Lage: Today is April 4, 1996, and this is the first session of an oral history with Kenneth Stamp. We're going to start with some personal background because we all recognize how our personal background affects our lives and our work.

Stamp: Yes, indeed.

Lage: I want you to tell me about the setting in which you grew up and about your family. Shall we just start in a general way like that?

Stamp: I was born in Milwaukee [Wisconsin], 1912. I was born in an overwhelmingly German neighborhood where, as a small child, I think I heard as much German spoken on the streets as English.

Lage: That was your own family's background as well?

Stamp: In my own family, my paternal grandfather [William] came from north Germany as a young man about 1850. He came with his brother, and settled in Milwaukee. His brother went to Texas and spawned quite a number of Stamps around Waco, and now they're in Houston and San Antonio. My father's father came as a tailor and set up a tailor shop. He married a German woman. Both of them died when my father [Oscar] was very young. I think he was five when his mother died and seven when his father died. He had, as I recall, six siblings. He was the youngest of seven. He grew up in a Methodist orphanage in Ohio; that is, he spent the next seven years in an orphanage, and then came back and lived in Milwaukee.

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

I don't know much about my paternal grandfather's wife except that I know she was German. Her name was Protzman, and it couldn't be anything but German.

After my father left the orphanage, he lived with his sister, named Selma. She's a very important figure in my life, as I'll tell you later. He started as a draftsman, worked in an architect's office. Then he became a salesman selling some kind of lamp which led to his traveling pretty much in the East--New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia. Then, ultimately, he came back to Milwaukee and got a job in the United States Post Office as a postal employee.

Lage: When would that have been?

Stamp: Well, he was working at the post office when he met my mother, so by 1910, maybe before that, he was working in the post office.

On my maternal side, my maternal grandfather [Henry William Schmidt] also came from north Germany, and my maternal grandmother [Annie Stoll] came from Switzerland from a little town called Stein-on-Rhine, which is just across the Rhine River from Germany.

Lage: Was this in the German area?

Stamp: It's the German section of Switzerland, yes. It's a beautiful village. My wife and I visited it some years ago and wondered why they would ever leave such a beautiful, charming place, but I presume the motives were economic.

Lage: Were there family stories about why people came?

Stamp: I have no idea.

Lage: Your father probably didn't know.

Stamp: I don't know, but you know, as a child, one is less curious about these things. Then when I got curious about it, it was too late. Anyway, I have no idea why the two brothers--my father's father and uncle--came, but I have my suspicion. He came in 1850. That was right after the Revolution of 1848, and whether they were involved in it or not, I don't know, but my hunch is that they came to escape the draft, the Prussian draft, because they came out of Prussia.

There is an interesting thing about both sides of this family: they were all Germans and not a single Lutheran or Catholic in the lot. On both sides they were German Evangelicals. My maternal grandmother was born in a little town outside of

Milwaukee. My understanding is that my grandfather was brought here as a baby. That I'm not sure about.

In any case, my father's family, being Evangelicals, joined a German Methodist church in Milwaukee, and my mother's parents joined a German Baptist church in Milwaukee. [laughs] When my father and mother [Eleanor] met, the great issue in the marriage was which church they would agree on. They would have to belong to the same church, but the big issue was baptism.

Lage: So this was something that was quite important to them.

Stampp: It was very important to them. The Methodists believe in infant baptism, and the Baptists don't believe in infant baptism, and they also believe in dunking you rather than just sprinkling you. So the great compromise was this: my mother would leave the Baptist church and join my father's Methodist church, but there would be no infant baptism. The children would be baptized at the age of twelve. So I remember an embarrassing Sunday morning when I had to march up to the altar with mothers and fathers with babes in arms to be baptized.

Lage: Just a regular baptism? You weren't dunked?

Stampp: No, no.

Lage: That was the compromise.

Stampp: No, they were in the Methodist church as a compromise. I was sprinkled rather than dunked, and it was at the age of twelve.

Lage: Well, that would say something also about your parents' ability to compromise.

Stampp: Yes. There were some things they found harder to compromise on, but they could compromise on that.

Now, I must tell you about my grandparents on my mother's side because they're the ones I knew. I don't know much about my father's parents since they died early, except that I know that my father's father was a very strict disciplinarian, very strict, from everything I've heard--a real German master of the house.

My mother's parents were devout Baptists, quite fundamentalist, and they were Sabbatarians. You didn't spend money on Sundays. You went to church twice on Sundays. There was no drinking, no smoking, no card-playing, no dancing. She used to call playing cards "devil cards."

Lage: These were all things that you were exposed to.

Stampp: My mother grew up in this, and my father was a bit less strict about these things, but it had an impact on me. One of my mother's uncles, her mother's brother, was a Free Methodist minister, and he ran a Free Methodist college in McPherson, Kansas. Free Methodists--all the things I've told you were true of all of them.

Lage: Of the Free Methodists as well as the Baptists?

Stampp: Well, the Free Methodists broke away from the Methodist church back in the early nineteenth century, on issues that related to slavery, and the Free Methodists were more antislavery than the Methodists. They were very, very strict on these personal habits. In addition to that, in the Free Methodist church, you can't have pictures, you can't have statues, you can't even have a piano. The minister will have a little pipe and he'll give them the tune, and they'll start singing.

I was taken to some of these Free Methodist church services as a child and even to something that sounds very nineteenth century: a revival meeting, a tent meeting. I was exposed to a lot of this preaching.

Lage: Was this more characteristic of German culture? It sounds Midwestern, I think.

Stampp: This neighborhood was largely a German Protestant neighborhood. I think probably most of them were Lutherans, but a good number of them went to my grandmother's and grandfather's German Baptist church. My grandfather was a rather big figure in the church. He was a grocer. He ran a very successful grocery store, so he always provided the grape juice--naturally grape juice--and bread for the communion service.

This was the background that my mother came out of and carried into her marriage. When I was young, I was churched a great deal and sometimes would go to my grandmother's German Baptist church in the evening and listen to--well, at least hear sermons preached in German, which I didn't understand.

Lage: You didn't pick up the language?

Stampp: My grandmother and grandfather always spoke German to each other. My grandfather spoke English fluently, my grandmother somewhat less fluently. My mother and her sisters always spoke German to their mother, my grandmother. My mother used to talk to her on the telephone almost every day, always in German. My father and

mother were fluent in German, but you know, people didn't teach their children languages. I'll tell you one reason: these were lower middle class people. They had come to America, and they had no intention of ever going back to Germany or to Europe, and no thought that their children would ever go to Europe. I mean, it was expensive to go to Europe, so they saw no particular reason. My parents spoke German as their secret language when they wanted to discuss things that my sister and I were not supposed to understand, so our game was trying to break the code, and whatever German we learned was simply by trying to find out what they were saying.

There were a few little things: we had a little prayer that we said before meals in German, and my father used to sing songs in German to me and my sister and explained what they were. My father taught me the alphabet in German, little things like that, but as far as real communication, no. I didn't ever learn German.

Backing Away from Religious Tradition

Stamp: Let's go back to my mother and her fundamentalism. It really did have quite an impact on me when I was a child. I remember at the age of about ten, eleven, or twelve becoming extremely religious and reading the Bible--almost as if I had one of those religious experiences. It didn't last long, but for a couple of years it was important.

To my mother it was okay to go to movies but not on Sundays. It was okay to go to school dances.

Lage: Oh, so she loosened up a bit.

Stamp: She loosened up that much, but my parents were both strict teetotallers. There was no alcohol in our house. They strongly supported the Prohibition amendment, the Eighteenth Amendment. We had no Sunday newspaper. What else? Those were the main things. It was okay to go to movies. However, they had to be what my mother would call "wholesome" movies. There were a lot of movies she didn't think were wholesome.

Lage: Did she require church attendance?

Stamp: Oh, yes. I was sent off to Sunday school and sat through sermons in the Methodist church. I remember them well. I never listened; they bored me to death.

Lage: Except for that short period that you mentioned.

Stamp: Except for that very short period, but even then the sermons were something that I found tedious. I can remember sitting in the church service. A Methodist minister, at least in my day, had a cadence in his sermons. He would begin quietly, and it would get louder and louder and more dramatic and more dramatic. Then I always knew when the climax came, and that was great because I knew that five minutes later it would be over. [laughter]

Lage: You were seeing it as a theatrical performance.

Stamp: Absolutely. I did go to Sunday school, and many of my friends in elementary school days and high school days came out of the Methodist church that I went to, Kingsley Methodist Episcopal Church.

When I was fifteen, I had a very good Sunday school teacher. This was a class of friends of mine, and there must have been about a dozen of us. This rather liberal Christian Sunday school teacher must have thought--his name was Davis, I remember--he must have thought that these young men were very soon going to begin to be skeptical about the Bible, biblical passages, and so on. In anticipation of this, he offered a sort of liberal interpretation of the Bible: in effect, you don't have to believe all the stories in the Old Testament. These have some symbolic significance. There are even things in the New Testament--you can be a good Christian without believing in the Trinity, possibly Christ turning stones into bread.

Lage: Was that radical in that setting?

Stamp: Well, it was something that I had never heard before. This was something that really shook me. I began to think, and I began to become skeptical about one thing after another, and I never knew where to stop. The result was that in a year or two, by the time I was seventeen, I was a flaming atheist. I shouldn't say flaming, because I never discussed religion with my parents.

Lage: Yes, this is what I wondered: who did you talk to about this?

Stamp: I tried once with my father, and I got nowhere, so I stopped. Actually, I discussed religion very seldom with anybody. This I thought reflected a certain sensitivity on my part. I knew that religion is a very personal thing, and the last thing I would have ever wanted to do is to challenge some devout Christian.

Religion was something I could no longer accept. It took me a long time to gradually change from a total atheist to an

agnostic, which seemed to me a more logical intellectual position to take. I think emotionally I was an atheist, but when I had to express my position I would say, "I'm an agnostic." I really have never changed from that. I haven't gone to church for years.

Lage: That's a big change from what seemed almost a focus on religion.

Stampp: Yes. Little by little, I broke some of the other barriers. Let me think. I guess the first one I broke was--I remember a friend of mine trying to persuade me to go to a movie on Sunday afternoon, and I remember standing in front of the movie house having a terrible battle inside of me. I finally couldn't do it. I just said, "No, I can't."

Lage: Now, was this when you had started to question things, or earlier?

Stampp: No, I was ten or eleven years old at that point. That's when I had those battles.

I remember a terrible day. I was a fanatical lover of baseball when I was a kid. I used to follow a minor league team in Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Brewers. I would get to the baseball game any time I had a chance. I remember finally I went one Sunday. I had another battle, but this time baseball won, and I went. My mother of course found out that I had gone, and that afternoon I found her in tears because I had gone to a baseball game on Sunday. The clincher was that she said, "And it's Mother's Day." [laughter]

Lage: Oh, dear! These are things that we remember after all these years.

Stampp: It was with me for a long time, but that sort of broke it. I had no problem going to school dances; that was okay with them.

Lage: I'm surprised that was all right.

Stampp: That was okay, and my parents didn't object to card-playing. They used to play a game called Five Hundred. It was a little simpler than bridge, I think.

Lage: But not on Sunday?

Stampp: I don't know. I don't know the answer to that. I can't remember whether they ever played cards on Sunday.

I never had any alcohol. When I was twelve years old, I signed a pledge in the church never to drink alcohol. I spent my first two years--and we'll get to this later--in Milwaukee State

Teachers College when I was eighteen and nineteen. I had a very good friend at that time, we used to double date. By this time--this is the early 1930s--Prohibition may have been in force somewhere in the United States, but certainly not in Milwaukee. You could walk into any saloon in Milwaukee, with Prohibition or without it, and order a whiskey or whatever. I used to go with my date, and my friend and his date, and they would have a highball, and I would have nothing. I would have ginger ale or something like that.

I didn't smoke. I can remember in my--I was twenty, so it must have been my sophomore year in college at Milwaukee State Teachers College. I can't tell you why except that I know I was in some way defying my father. I went to a drugstore and bought a packet of cigarettes and walked to Lake Park, very near the college. I walked into this park, sat on a bench, took a cigarette, lit it, smoked it, and hated it.

Lage: Of course! [laughs]

Stampp: I was saying, "By golly, I'm my own man now."

Lage: [laughter] Now, are you thinking this in retrospect, or was this really what you were thinking?

Stampp: Oh, no. I can remember taking puffs of that cigarette and saying this. It was in defiance of my father. My recollection isn't very strong of why I felt I needed to at that point. I probably had some row with him about something, so I was smoking. I never told him that I had become a smoker.

Lage: You did start smoking?

Stampp: I did start smoking then. I never was a very heavy smoker, but I did start smoking. I remember coming home one evening maybe a year or two later, and my mother smelled cigarette smoke on my gloves, so more crying, more tears. [laughs] Really, the reason I never told them is that I just didn't want to go through one of these crises. I hated to see my mother weep.

Now, the same thing happened with alcohol. One night in the same saloon--we always seemed to go to this same saloon--there were little tables where we could sit and chat. I finally couldn't take it any more, and I can remember that my first drink was a gin buck, a horrible drink; it's gin, and the kind of gin you got in those days was pretty awful. It's sweet soda, kind of a sickening drink, as I think about it. From then on, if I felt like having a drink with a group, I did.

Lage: It didn't leave residue of guilt, it sounds, once your parents knew?

Stampp: [hesitantly] No. It was a long time before I ever told my parents that I--in fact, I never told my parents that I had liquor. This is getting way later on. My sister eventually married a Norwegian who came to America when he was thirteen, and he was a very charming man, and he charmed my parents out of some of their ideas. He even persuaded them finally to have an after-dinner liqueur, or maybe it was a before-dinner liqueur, an Alexander, which is chocolate liqueur and cream on the top. So before my parents died, I saw them having a little sherry before dinner and even a little bit of wine.

Lage: Was your sister older or younger?

Stampp: I was the oldest of three. My sister was three years younger than me, and I had a brother who was eleven years younger than me, who died just a year ago last December.

Lage: Did this religious strictness carry over into a highly disciplined family? Was your father a disciplinarian as his father had been?

Stampp: Oh, my father was a very strict disciplinarian. He probably was not quite as strict as his father, but he was the head of the house. Typical of that period, he had nothing to do with the kitchen. My mother did the baking and the cooking. When we were old enough, my sister and I would dry the dishes and do chores in the kitchen, and my father would be sitting and reading somewhere. That's the kind of man he was, and it was typical of that period. He was not any different from a lot of other men.

Lage: Did he make the decisions in the household?

Stampp: Yes, probably.

Hard Lessons at a Young Age

Lage: I would like a little more about your boyhood.

Stampp: Yes, let's go back to that.

I have to tell you one more thing about my family: when I was five years old, maybe just going on six, my father was very sick, I think probably with the flu. I think my grandparents and my parents were susceptible to quacks, and he had someone come in.

They were sort of like chiropractors, but they called themselves naprapaths. They had a theory about illness being caused by problems in your ligaments, so the treatments were wonderful for a backache but no good for flu or things like that. My father believed in it as sort of a cure-all. The naprapath who treated him--fortunately he survived it--persuaded him to become a naprapath.

When I was just about six, I think, our whole household broke up. My father went to a school of naprapathy in Chicago. My mother went back to her parents and worked in my grandfather's grocery store. She took my sister with her; my sister was only three then. My grandmother had a housekeeper who said that she simply couldn't have me around. I was too active and got into things, and it would make her nervous.

My mother, with, I trust, some reluctance, decided to send me to stay with an aunt. This went on for the next approximately two years. It was a horrible time in my life. I stayed with an aunt for a while.

Lage: Was this in your mother's family, or was this aunt Selma?

Stamp: I stayed with the wife of my mother's brother. She and her husband were temporarily separated, and I stayed with her.

Lage: Oh, what a situation!

Stamp: I stayed there for--I don't know, I can't give you time. From there, when my aunt finally couldn't keep me, I was sent to some widow. All of this meant changing schools. She kept me for a couple of weeks. I remember helping someone haul a coaster with ice in it, and I fell and hit my mouth on the ice and came up with a bloody mouth. The woman called and said to my mother, "I can't keep him."

Lage: This is just like a tale out of Dickens!

Stamp: Well, some of it is like Dickens. So I was moved again, this time to a Mrs. Niemeyer who ran a boarding house.

Lage: You were six or eight?

Stamp: I was six then. She ran a boarding house, and I was there for quite a long time. I remember going to still another public school. This really was kind of like Dickens because her boarders were older men. I was kept in the kitchen, and I was fed in the kitchen. I was losing weight, so my mother was giving me Guernsey

milk, rich milk, and they were using it. I stayed there and had a dreadful time, just a dreadful time.

Lage: Your mother was in the same town?

Stampp: My mother was about a mile away in my grandmother's house.

Lage: Did you go to visit or have Sunday dinner?

Stampp: I would be there on Christmas Day, and my mother used to take me down to this naprapath to have some treatments. I can remember a night--I'm telling you things that I don't talk about very often--I can remember one night my mother brought me back to Mrs. Niemeyer's house. It must have been about nine o'clock at night. I cried--I was standing on the porch--and begged her to take me with her.

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Stampp: I was six years old, and I began walking the streets. I began thinking, and I can't explain why this is true, but it is true, and it's an extraordinary thing for a child. I thought that night--I didn't verbalize it--but I thought that night, I can't depend on my parents, I'm going to have to look out for myself. In a way, it was a horrible experience, but it was at a very young age a maturing experience.

Lage: Growing up fast, at age six.

Stampp: Yes. So I stayed with this Mrs. Neimeyer five months, six months, I don't know, and I got rather sick. I remember my mother coming over with one of the sisters of my grandmother, an aunt who was one of these fundamentalist Christians, and her way of dealing with illness--she had two things: prayer and castor oil. I had both. The prayer didn't help, and the castor oil was horrible.

Because I was quite ill--it must have been flu, I don't know what else--they took me away from this place and put me in another place, which was just about a half a block from my grandmother, with a Mrs. Sherman, who was a rather nice lady. I stayed with her, and so transferred to another school.

Lage: Was this another boarding house, or just a woman's home?

Stampp: No, Mrs. Sherman was a widow, and she kept me. There was no one else there. She really was quite nice, and my mother was within one hundred yards or so, and I could see her and see my sister.

Then, eventually, for the last couple of months--I don't know why Mrs. Schultz, who was the housekeeper, finally relented and said I could come there--I stayed with my grandparents.

Lage: And your mother.

Stamp: With my mother and my sister. I can remember being very casual about school. If I went to school, I would go home any time I felt like it. I was learning nothing.

Lage: It wasn't something your mother was looking after, it sounds like.

Stamp: My mother was so busy. She was working all day in the grocery store trying to make some money. A house that we had recently bought was rented out, and my father--I don't know--maybe he borrowed money, because he certainly didn't have much money at that time.

Lage: Did your mother support your father's choice to be trained in naprapathy?

Stamp: Yes, she did. I never heard of her--well, [laughs] later on--that gets on into the 1920s and thirties. My father was never much of a success at this, and my mother once in a while would say, "You used to get a really steady salary when you worked at the post office, and now we've got this rather insecure existence."

The first three years after I was born, we lived upstairs from my grandparents, until I was three, maybe four. That was rather nice because my mother was the oldest, and she had two sisters and two brothers, and the two sisters were down below, two aunts of mine that I saw a lot of. I loved my grandfather; he was just a wonderful man. I guess I really was more devoted to him than I was to my own father. He used to take me--during this period when my father was in Chicago--my grandfather used to go down to the Commission Market early in the morning in a little Ford truck to pick up strawberries, raspberries, fruits, and vegetables. He used to take me with him, and I used to love going down there.

Lage: So that was a source of some stability.

Stamp: That's right, that's right. My grandmother was not much of a source; she was a terrible worrier and a fussy. I can remember sitting in the kitchen with my grandfather having lunch, away from the store, and my grandmother, all in German, fussing at him about something. I can hear him--I can still see him sitting there smiling and listening to her, and finally saying, "Ach, Annie," something in German, "don't be so excited," something like that.

We left the flat upstairs from my grandparents when I was four. I think my father finally had as much of my grandmother, his mother-in-law, as he could take, and he wanted to get away. We rented a house for a year, and then we bought a little bungalow, what was then way out on the edge of Milwaukee. It was a new bungalow that nobody had lived in before, and in front of us I can remember were fields of grass, nothing but fields. That was wonderful--I was five--for a five-year-old child to have, this great field to play in. North of us one block was the Milwaukee city limit.

We returned to that house when my father finished naprapathy school. I was seven. My father set up his practice, and it was slow going, but he finally managed to buy a Ford--I think it was a 1921 Ford.

Lage: Was that a sign of prosperity then?

Stampp: Well, he had to have it because he made house calls. The house was--in my recollection, the house cost \$4,500, and on that he took out a mortgage of \$2,500, which he got from my mother's father, my grandfather. In the twenties my father was not doing very well. Actually, he was a man of many talents, but he was not cut out to be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a professional man because he didn't have the social graces that he needed. He was not gregarious; he was a rather introverted man. He was never very successful, and there were times when we took roomers into our house to help meet expenses in the twenties. I can remember--I think one year my father did quite well, and there was sort of relief in the house. Then came the Depression, and things really got bad.

Lage: So the twenties were not the Roaring Twenties for you.

Stampp: The twenties were certainly not the Roaring Twenties for me. First of all, you couldn't roar very much in this rather Christian fundamentalist house, and there wasn't much money.

Lage: There wasn't the prosperity that you associate--

Stampp: No, there was not enough money.

As soon as I was twelve--that was 1924--I got a newspaper route, and I was to a certain extent self-employed from then on. I got no spending money from my parents. I earned my own money. I even bought some of my clothes. In addition to newspapers, I was selling magazines, and eventually when I was a junior in high school, I got a job working in a drugstore. When I started Milwaukee State Teachers College, after school I worked in my

grandfather's grocery store. So I was doing some kind of work from twelve years on, either delivering newspapers or selling magazines or working in the drugstore as a soda jerk or working in my grandfather's store.

Boyhood Interests

Stampp: I am forgetting one part of my childhood that was really very important. I don't know how I forgot it. When I was twelve, I joined the Boy Scouts. Every summer, I would go to the Boy Scout camp for two weeks. That, to me, was just marvelous. I worked my way all the way up to an Eagle Scout, and became a junior assistant scoutmaster eventually. Then in my last year in high school and my first two years in college, I got a job working at a Boy Scout camp all summer long.

Lage: Was this--it wouldn't be wilderness--an outdoor camp?

Stampp: It was on Silver Lake which was a lovely lake about thirty-five miles west of Milwaukee, and the camp was called Indian Mound Reservation. There was a great Indian mound there in the shape of a turtle. It was beautiful land. I was called the hike master. I used to take groups out on hikes, sometimes overnight hikes, and also on canoe trips. There was a chain of lakes so that you were able to go from one lake through a stream into another lake and on and on. I used to take canoe trips with eight or ten scouts.

Lage: Is that an interest that you've kept up?

Stampp: No, when I went to Madison that was the end of it. I even helped to start a new scout troop in Milwaukee. The summers were just wonderful. I had lots of friends, obviously, and we had lots of swimming and boating, and it was just perfect.

Lage: So those were the good parts.

Stampp: I was even paid a little bit. In addition to room and board, I think I got something like \$100 in the summer for working there. That was great.

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Stampp: I think I ought to talk a little bit about who my friends were when I was in high school. Most of them came out of Kingsley Methodist Episcopal Church. Earlier I had neighborhood friends, and every spare moment I had, I was out playing baseball with

them. I even helped to organize a little athletic club in our neighborhood, and we bought and sold tickets at a neighborhood movie. We got part of the profits and used that to buy jerseys. We called ourselves the Eagle A.C., Athletic Club. Baseball was my great passion.

To my great regret, my mother wanted me very much to learn to play the piano. I had two years of piano lessons, and after a teary scene--my mother was with tears again--I stopped the piano. She persuaded me to take up the violin. I had two years of violin lessons with the same result: after two years, I gave up.

Lage: Do you have any sense of what vision she had for you?

Stamp: Well, my parents loved music, and my mother could play the piano a little bit. My father had, for his time, a lot of seventy-eight classical records of opera excerpts and even Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. My mother's brother and one of my mother's sisters were singers. They had music lessons, and they used to sing in church. I think all of my mother's siblings had piano lessons.

Lage: So it was what children should do.

Stamp: This was a German family.

Lage: Did your sister get the same?

Stamp: Well, now, my sister was something else. My sister started piano lessons when she was about seven, and she just took to it. Nobody had to tell her to practice. She had piano lessons for years, I don't know, eight or nine years, and this became one of the great loves of her life. She became a very good amateur pianist, still plays. Later on, she even played--three other women had a teacher, there were four of them, and they had four pianos, and they used to play symphonies with the four pianos. In my later years, I have envied my sister and wished that my father, who was a strict disciplinarian, had used a little discipline on me and made me stick to the piano--as Mozart's father undoubtedly did--or the violin, either one.

Lage: Because you haven't gone on with the baseball, or had you?

Stamp: No, I've lost interest in baseball. I was interested for a long time, but that was my great interest as a child.

Lage: How about reading in the home?

Stamp: My sister and I both were readers, and my sister even more than I. She didn't play baseball, she just read.

Lage: Was that encouraged?

Stampp: I don't remember. We had a small collection. There was one collection of books that I remember, it was something they must have bought from a salesman: *Journeys Through Bookland*. The first volume was all fairy stories, then on to things more and more mature. My mother used to do a lot of reading to my sister and me, and we loved to sit and listen to her read. My father never did that, but my mother would do that. As soon as we were able to read, we made heavy use of the Milwaukee Public Library.

I can remember my sister wanted to read before she could read. She would get on her knees and on her elbows on the floor and have the newspaper in front of her and pretend she was reading, make funny noises. That's all she would do--"galla, galla, galla," or something like that. In any case, as soon as we were able to read, we were at the public library and used to bring books home.

Lage: And do you remember any favorite books?

Stampp: I remember a child's biography of George Washington, and some other books that related to history which made me think very early that I wanted to be a historian. In fact, in fifth grade I told a friend of mine I was going to be a history teacher. He told me he was going to be a lawyer, and he was, and I am. Harold Singer said, "I'm going to be a lawyer."

Lage: Isn't that something? Fifth grade.

Stampp: Yes. My mother wanted to censor our books. She wanted to be sure they were wholesome books, and she had some funny ideas. I loved to read Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* books, and she didn't think they were very nice books. I don't know why. So I borrowed them from my friends, since I didn't have them.

Lage: Weren't those made into movies also, or were they at that time?

Stampp: Yes, but I never thought the movies were up to the *Tarzan* and *Tarzan of the Apes* and *The Son of Tarzan* and *The Return of Tarzan* and *Tarzan and the*--did you ever read any *Tarzan* books? I'll bet you did.

Lage: I don't think I did, but I did see some of the movies.

Stampp: Yes. I used to love to read Tom Swift books, *Tom Swift and His Photo Telephone* and all of those. I loved those.

Lage: The Hardy boys, did you read the Hardy boys?

Stamp: No, I didn't read the Hardy boys, but I read a whole series--there must have been twenty books in the series--written by someone named Percy Keese Fitzhugh. They were books about a Boy Scout named Roy Blakely and his incredible adventures, and I had many of them in my own little library upstairs.

I had two magazines--someone subscribed to two magazines for me, *Boys' Life* and *The American Boy*, and I loved reading the stories in them. I began reading fiction in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Incidentally, in the 1920s, *Saturday Evening Post* had the best short story writers in the country--McKinley Cantor and all kinds of first-rate fiction writers.

Lage: Was the Bible read regularly?

Stamp: Well, there were times when my father would read the Bible to us. This was sort of off and on, and that was when I was very young. Later on I didn't look at the Bible any more until I got old enough to think of it as something other than the source of all wisdom. I began to think of it as literature, and then found it fascinating again, but that took a lot of maturing.

Elementary and High School Education

Stamp: In elementary school, I had lots of trouble. I attribute it to those first two years when I was in first and second grade and moved around a great deal. I was always a very active young child. I had to be doing something all the time. I found it hard to sit still in school, too. It took me a long time to run into a teacher who liked me; most of them didn't like me. I was a problem for them, and they were problems for me. Whereas my sister was always so sweet--[laughter]

Lage: That's probably the story in a lot of families.

Stamp: Of course she always did extremely well in school, and I was doing very badly in school. I particularly had trouble with penmanship. My penmanship was atrocious. I remember one of my teachers in seventh grade, I think it was, gave me an F in penmanship, and I had to go to summer school. In those days, you were supposed to do the Palmer method--arm movement. Do you remember that?

Lage: Yes, I do know that. I think I was trained in that way, too.

Stamp: You used to sit in seventh grade or eighth grade, and the phonograph would be on, and you were supposed to be doing up and

down, up and down, circles and circles and circles. I don't know what on earth they thought you would gain from that. Well, I had to go to summer school to improve my penmanship. [laughter] School never really interested me very much.

Lage: Even as you got a little older?

Stampp: No.

Lage: When you decided you wanted to be an historian?

Stampp: Well, I always did well in history. I would do well in one subject and just terrible in other subjects.

Lage: How were math and science?

Stampp: I was pretty good in math. I did very well in arithmetic, in geography, and in my history class. I had finally met a teacher who liked me in my history class. On the other hand, the teacher that I had in penmanship and spelling was an absolute horror. I mean we had a real civil war. I hated that teacher, I can't tell you how much.

Lage: Was this a woman?

Stampp: A woman. She was my homeroom teacher as well as my penmanship and spelling teacher. It was just mutual hate. I remember one time at the end of the term--we used to have parents' day--and we all brought flowers to our room and put things up on the wall.

Lage: The usual.

Stampp: The usual. This teacher told me I was supposed to bring flowers--no, she asked us to bring flowers. I wouldn't bring any to her, but I brought them to another teacher. So she sent me home and said, "You go home, and you bring some flowers." I went home, and I picked a bunch of wilted roses, really wilted roses, and gave them to her as my revenge.

Lage: [laughs] It's amazing that these things have so much impact.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: You don't forget them.

Stampp: No, I don't forget them. One other class that I really liked was art and music. I wasn't much of an artist, but I loved to look at the pictures, and I loved to sing. We had a lot of singing in seventh and eighth grade, and I remember my teacher put me in the

alto section, and I still was a boy soprano. I said, "I can't sing that low," so I got to be a boy soprano. I wanted to carry the main part anyway, and that's soprano. I loved that, just absolutely loved it.

Lage: So there were things about school that attracted you.

Stamp: That I did well in. Of course I loved recess and when we played baseball after school. Well, after school I began carrying newspapers.

I had the same problem in high school. I was not a good student. Let's see, what did I do well in? I did well in algebra and not so well in geometry. I did only medium well even in my history classes. In my high school, you actually declared a major, and I majored in history. So I had a course in ancient history, medieval history, modern European history and American history through the four years. Unfortunately, the way it was taught was just terribly boring. You had a textbook, nothing else. You read a textbook, and you had to read so many pages and go in and recite, stand up and then recite part of it. Oh, that was just--

Lage: Deadly.

Stamp: --terribly deadly, yes.

Lage: It sounds very academic. Was it a high school that was academic, or did it also have some preparation for people who may not be going on to college?

Stamp: My high school was just the neighborhood high school, the nearest one. There was a boys' technical high school for those who--well, it was possible by Wisconsin law, I think, to start part-time work as early as fifteen years, so you would be working and you would have a job in a factory or something, and then you would also go to the boys' tech where you would learn some craft, but you would have something besides that. You would have some reading and English.

Lage: When did you start thinking that maybe you would go on to college?

Stamp: Oh, always. Neither of my parents went to college. In fact, my grandfather took my mother out of school when she finished fifth grade. He needed her in the store, and she learned to keep the books. My father finished high school, but that was it, except for going to this school of naprapathy. Ultimately, incidentally, he got a license as a chiropractor, so he was sort of both then.

I'm the oldest son. My parents never had that feeling about my sister, but of course Kenneth was going to college. One reason was that--I have to back up a little bit. My father should have been a cabinet maker, he should have been a carpenter, he should have been a contractor. He could do anything with his hands, and I could do nothing.

Lage: So they realized that wasn't your inclination?

Stamp: He never encouraged me. He would be doing something, making something, and I would be there, and I can remember him always saying, "You'd better let me do that." So I would finally say, in effect, "The hell with it," and let him do it. I remember him saying one time, "Well, you've got to go on to college, because you can't do anything with your hands," and he was quite right. I wasn't very good, and I'm still no good with my hands. My family always worried when I started trying to do something with the plumbing because they knew it could get worse. [laughter]

You asked what I was good in. I was pretty good in algebra. I was good in English. I had some wonderful English teachers in my junior and senior year in high school. One had a wonderful voice, and she loved to read poetry, and I just loved listening to her. Do you remember Vachel Lindsay, a poet?

Lage: Yes.

Stamp: Well, that's not great poetry, but she used to read it with this deep voice, and I just loved it. I liked writing little essays.

Then in my senior year, I had another marvelous English teacher. We were reading Shakespeare. We read Shakespeare all the way through high school, in fact, and I enjoyed it very much. There were set books that we had to read: *Jane Eyre* obviously, and *Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*. I can't remember all of them, but I loved reading them. We started off, as far as Shakespeare was concerned, reading *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*, and then we got on to *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. It was done in a way that was supposed to be deadening. That is, we analyzed these plays, and we learned bits of them.

Lage: You recited?

Stamp: I loved it. It never bored me at all. I loved learning bits of them.

In my senior year in high school, the second semester, I came down with pneumonia. Now, I have to go back a little bit. Suddenly in my junior year I got interested in chemistry, and I

set up a chemical lab in my basement at home. I spent much of my money buying beakers and retorts and chemicals. It was a bad place for me to be spending time; it was a cold, damp basement, and I came down with a really bad case of pneumonia. I was out of school for five or six weeks. There was no penicillin.

Lage: No penicillin. That makes such a difference.

Stamp: You just hoped you survived, that's all. The result was my father came home with the bad news that I wasn't going to be able to graduate in June because I had missed so many classes. I had to drop all my classes except English. I tried to go on with Latin, but I was just too far behind. I had that senior year this wonderful English teacher, Miss Strohm. She agreed that in order to get caught up I could meet with her at eleven o'clock every morning. She would give up her free period.

This was the great experience of my school. I fell in love with her, she was just a wonderful woman. She loved late Victorian and Edwardian fiction. I read Hugh Walpole and Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy--

Lage: This is pretty heavy stuff.

Stamp: --and H. G. Wells. I read right straight through *The Forsythe Saga*--I was a senior--and I loved it. I enjoyed coming in and talking to her. This was a tutorial, an hour of just talking about the books I was reading. I had to go back that fall to finish--in other words, it was four and a half years getting out of high school. I was not going to be in her English class that fall, but I wanted to be with her. She was the head of the Washington Players, and I'm not much of an actor, but I was determined to get into the Washington Players just to be with her. So I did. I had to do some little pantomime. I managed to get in.

Lage: Was it a high school group or a community theater?

Stamp: No, this was just the high school. It was the Washington Players, Washington High School, and I was in it my senior year. I acted in one of the plays, but I was with her--this marvelous teacher I had.

Lage: Was she a young woman?

Stamp: She was in her thirties, I would guess mid-thirties, unmarried. Most of the teachers were unmarried women in those days. That to me was the high point of my high school years.

Music also was getting to be pretty important in my life. I started with my father's records and singing in the seventh and eighth grades. In high school, I sang in the high school glee club, and in our church I sang in the junior choir--even when I had become a flaming atheist, I loved singing the hymns. A lot of my friends were in the choir, too. We had to rehearse on Thursday nights and then sing Sunday night services.

Lage: So that wasn't an obligation, that was something you wanted to do.

Stampp: No, that was something I just loved very much.

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Stampp: Now, out of this church choir that I sang in came some of my closest friends. We even organized a little tea-and-toast club. There were six or seven of us. We would go from one family to another each Sunday evening before choir. We would have tea and toast, and our mothers would lay out a nice meal. Somebody would be playing the piano, and we would be singing.

Lage: Were these boys and girls?

Stampp: These were six or seven young friends of mine, all boys--all teenagers--but we all had girlfriends, and we had parties. We belonged to a club at the church, too, called the--Junior League? I can't remember what it was called. These were boys and girls.

Lage: So there were plenty of activities for young people.

Stampp: Most of my social activities were through this church, even in these years when I was an absolute atheist.

Lage: It was more than religion.

Stampp: This was a social thing. I sang in the choir, rehearsed in the choir, and we had this tea-and-toast club. Then we would have parties and go roller skating; or somebody would have a cottage up at the lake, and we would all go up and party. Incidentally, there never was any alcohol--this was strictly nonalcoholic all the way through high school.

Lage: You didn't have too many rebels, it seems, or they were on the outskirts of this group?

Stampp: This high school was ethnically unmixed. There were Catholics, Jews, and Protestants, but ethnically, there were Jews and Gentiles. There wasn't a single black, there wasn't a single Asian, there wasn't a single Hispanic.

Lage: You wouldn't really expect it, I would think.

Stamp: There were 1,800 students in this high school.

Lage: In the city of Milwaukee, though.

Stamp: Yes, and it was in a purely Caucasian neighborhood. The closest we got to an ethnic mix was having some Jews in our classes.

Lage: Was it again strongly German American?

Stamp: I looked at the names. I still have a yearbook, and I looked at the names. There are some Russian Jewish names, some German Jewish names, but overwhelmingly the names are German. I saw a few Italian and French names.

Milwaukee, when I was a child, was cut in half by the Milwaukee River and the Kinnikinnick River. North of the river were the Germans, and south of the river were the Poles, and sort of in the middle there was a small community of Italians. Milwaukee, with a population of about 500,000, had about 1,500 blacks at that time, and a small group of Italians, and a scattering of Irish, too. It was interesting: the Poles were almost all on one side of the river, and the Germans were on the other side of the river.

Lage: And how about the Jewish population?

Stamp: They were everywhere.

Lage: Did they mix in school? Was there any anti-Semitism?

Stamp: There was a Jewish Boy Scout troop at the synagogue. Our Boy Scout troop met in the Kingsley Methodist Church; they weren't all members of the church but mostly tended to be.

Milwaukee State Teachers College--1931

Lage: Let's get you into college. Did you go right on to college after the extra semester?

Stamp: Yes. When I finished high school, I went in February 1931 immediately into what was then the Milwaukee State Teachers College, which is now the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. At that time it was strictly a teachers college. Most of the students at Milwaukee State Teachers College probably didn't

intend to go into teaching. It was just a very inexpensive place to go to college.

Lage: Most students lived at home?

Stampp: Most of them were Milwaukee kids, and they could live at home. I was at home. The tuition was twelve dollars a semester, and your textbooks were lent to you. They didn't give them to you, but you went to a place and got your textbooks free. So it cost twelve dollars to go to school there.

Lage: The Depression was on by then.

Stampp: That's right, the Depression was on.

Lage: Was there a thought that you should be working?

Stampp: Well, after school, I worked in my grandfather's store. My grandfather had given up his big store by then, and he tried to retire but couldn't stand it, so he started a little grocery store. I used to go and work with him after school and on Saturdays.

Lage: Were you thinking of being a teacher?

Stampp: I was working for a teacher's credential, a high school teacher's credential, and I was going to be a high school history teacher. That's all I was thinking of at that time.

Now, Milwaukee State Teachers College for two more years was academically a disaster for me. I hated the place. I did very badly there. I did fine in history; I had a wonderful history teacher there who had just come with a Ph.D. out of the University of Wisconsin. I liked that. I had a social science teacher--I don't know what else to call him--who was wonderful. Incidentally, by this time, I had become very radical politically.

So I didn't like Milwaukee State Teachers College, and I didn't do very well there. I was busy doing other things. I had to work every Saturday and all the time after school, so I didn't have much time. I was trying to write a novel and doing nothing about my school. I cut classes, and the result is I left a disastrous record there.

Aunt Selma and the University of Wisconsin--1933

Stamp: At the end of my sophomore year--this was a great crisis--in January 1933, I was called into a meeting with my English teacher, the dean, and someone else. I can't remember who it was. They told me, "Things are bad. We're in the Depression." This is 1933, at its worst. "There are no jobs for high school history teachers, and it would be well for you to switch into elementary education." I said, "No, I'm not going to do that. I'll take my chances. I want a high school job." They tried, "There just aren't jobs." Finally, my English teacher spoke up--I had done very badly even in English.

Lage: In English, which you loved.

Stamp: She was a terrible woman. My English teacher said, "Well, I can tell you, I'd never recommend you for a high school job." I don't know what ever got into me, I just exploded. I said, "Well, you won't ever have to, because I'm leaving this place." I went home and told my parents, "I'm not going back there." Then the question was, where would I go? My father said, "Well, would you like to go to Marquette University?" I said, "I'm not going to that Catholic institution." I have to tell you another thing: there was a lot of anti-Catholicism in my family because of their kind of Protestantism. My father had been very anti-Catholic, so I had no trouble saying, "Look, I'm not going to that Catholic college."

Lage: I'm surprised he suggested it.

Stamp: I really was, too.

I had a friend who was going to a little college about twenty miles outside of Milwaukee, Carroll College. He said, "Why don't you come out here and look at Carroll?" So I went out and spent the day there, and it looked pretty nice. I thought I would have to stay there, but I thought I could come home weekends, work in my grandfather's store and make some money and help pay the cost of this. I came home and was about to tell them, "I think I'd like to go to Carroll College."

My father came home that Friday night--now, this is where this maiden aunt, my aunt Selma, comes in. I've got to tell you a lot about her. My father used to confer with her when there were problems. She was a trained nurse, and she had taken on a job years earlier with a Mrs. Kiekhafer who had a stroke, a paralytic stroke, and she looked after her for years and years. This was a

very wealthy family. They owned the National Aluminum and Stamping Company. I don't think you can remember Nesco cookers.

Lage: The name is a little familiar.

Stampp: Well, it was an electric cooker. You could put your meat in one part and your potatoes in another part and vegetables in another part, and they were making lots of money out of this. They were paying my aunt very well, and my aunt gave my family a great deal of financial support. My father consulted his sister Selma about what I was going to do. So he came home on that Friday afternoon and said, "How would you like to go to Madison?" Well, you know, Madison was so far beyond my hopes, I just said, "Yeah."
[laughter]

Lage: Had you thought of it, or it just never occurred to you?

Stampp: I just knew I couldn't afford it. It was eighty-five miles away, and the tuition was at least thirty-two dollars a semester. You had to pay for your own books, and you had to pay room and board, and I would have no job, and how was I going to do it? I couldn't believe it. I said, "Yes!"

The next day I packed my suitcases, and on Sunday my father drove me to Madison. I found a nice room with an older retired couple for two dollars and fifty cents a week. I found a place where I could have my meals for sixty cents a day--ten cents for breakfast, twenty-five cents for dinner, and twenty-five cents for lunch--so the total cost was something like six dollars a week for room and board. My aunt was going to pay part of it, my father and mother were going to pay the rest.

So here I was suddenly on a Sunday afternoon in early February 1933, in Madison! Two days after I thought the whole thing was impossible.

Lage: It happened that fast?

Stampp: It happened that fast. I went to Madison, and Monday morning I went to the registrar's office. I had to get my transcripts out. My record was so awful that she said, "We'll admit you, but we'll admit you on probation. You've got to do better the first term, or you're out." Madison then had about 6,000 students, and I'm quite sure that if it hadn't been for the Depression, they would never have taken me at all.

Lage: They needed students?

Stampp: They needed students, yes. So I said, "Okay."

Lage: Had you discussed Madison with the history teacher you said had gone to Madison and had a Ph.D.?

Stampp: No, I hadn't discussed it with him.

Lage: This wasn't an influence.

Stampp: No. I didn't really discuss it with anyone, except my father and mother.

So I accepted the terms. I was on probation. I had a place to live. Then two things changed. First, I was away from my family, and I really needed to get away from my father, especially my father, but probably my whole family. The Depression made things not very pleasant at all. There were bad financial problems. I needed to get away from my father's discipline, so this was liberating. I can remember to this day standing in the street, watching my father's car disappear and thinking, "Liberation! Freedom!"

Lage: Yet your parents were the ones that did make it possible.

Stampp: They made it possible, that's right.

Lage: They wanted something good for you.

Stampp: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. In addition to that, I was in Madison. "Now," I said, "I'm going to be academic," so I really then got to be a student. I did well enough in those years to be Phi Beta Kappa at the end. My senior year I got straight A's.

Lage: So you really caught up.

Stampp: My focus now was on academics, and I was in an academic community. I had interesting professors, I had people that really excited me. I rarely had that at Milwaukee State Teachers College, so this was the great moment, really.

Radical Politics and Pacifism

Stampp: I must tell you, though, about politics. My father and my grandparents, my mother's parents, were all German Social Democrats. Milwaukee had a socialist mayor, the mayor for twenty-four years, from 1912, the year I was born, until 1936. He served six terms, this mayor.

Lage: What was his name?

Stampp: Daniel [Webster] Hoan. In those twenty-four years, there was never a breath of scandal or corruption in Milwaukee's government. They had the best health department, the best police department, the best public services, the best park system you could imagine. Daniel Hoan deserves a lot of credit for it. He never had a socialist majority on the city council. There was always a substantial socialist contingency but never a majority. The only newspaper we had in our house was the *Milwaukee Leader* which was a socialist newspaper.

Our congressman when I was young was Victor L. Berger, a socialist. He was the only socialist in the United States House of Representatives. My father was an ardent supporter of Eugene B. Debs and voted for him.

Lage: Somehow it doesn't seem to fit with the evangelical religion.

Stampp: The Catholics were not necessarily Social Democrats. It was the Lutherans and the Protestants who were. Anyway, this was a socialist family.

Lage: It doesn't seem to fit with the small business milieu of your family.

Stampp: You mean my grandfather being a grocer?

Lage: Right.

Stampp: Well, in Germany, a grocer could be a Social Democrat.

Lage: What did it mean to be a Social Democrat in Germany?

Stampp: In Germany? They were sort of reformed Marxists. They believed in the socialization of the tools of production.

Hoan's great crusade in all those years was to try to take over the electric company, the Milwaukee Electric Light and Power Company, or whatever it was called. The socialists believed, certainly, in nationalizing the railroads, nationalizing telegraph and telephone, nationalizing the mines. How far they would have gone I don't know, but certainly all those basic industries they would have socialized.

Lage: Was it discussed in the house a lot?

Stampp: Oh, yes. I can remember one time driving home from somewhere--and this was before I had ever proclaimed to my parents I wanted to be

a history teacher--and my mother turned to me and said, "What I would like you to be is a good socialist lawyer." [laughter]

Lage: Interesting.

Stampp: Yes. So my father supported Debs. Let's see, when was he first able to vote? I guess 1904. He voted for Debs in 1904, 1908, 1912. In 1916 Debs didn't run; another man ran, I can't remember who it was. Then came World War I, and as a Social Democrat my father was bitterly opposed to our getting involved in World War I.

Lage: He wasn't against the war as a German descendant?

Stampp: No, in my neighborhood and among my friends, I never heard any pro-German sentiment. They were opposed to the war. I can remember one time at the dinner table my father putting his fist on the table and saying--and this is socialist doctrine--"This is an imperialist war. It's an imperialist war. They're no better on one side than the other, and we have no business getting into it."

Lage: And that was widespread in the community?

Stampp: Well, there was considerable sentiment--I can remember my father was still working in the post office during the war. In 1917 I was five, and I can remember this, that in the post office there were lots of people who were opposed to Wilson's getting us involved in this war. Victor Berger, our congressman, voted against the declaration of war and made his antiwar stand quite clear, so he was expelled from Congress. He came back to Milwaukee, and he was reelected to Congress, but they refused to seat him, then he was reelected to Congress again. Finally, he was seated about 1923 or '22, something like that.

In 1920 when Eugene B. Debs was in prison because of his antiwar sentiment, he ran for president on the Socialist ticket in prison, and my father voted for him. In 1924, our senator, Robert M. LaFollette, ran for president as a Progressive. The Socialist party endorsed LaFollette, so my father voted for LaFollette.

During my two years in Milwaukee State Teachers College--partly because of the friends I had there and partly because of the Depression--I turned very radical, much more radical than my father. I went to Communist party headquarters, I attended Communist party public meetings. I came very close to joining the Communist party. I wavered between the Socialist party and the Communist party, and in the end I joined the Socialist party because I was a pacifist, and at that time, the Communists were

committed to a revolution, a violent revolution. As a pacifist I could not support the principle of violent revolution, and I thought, "If you're not committed to that, you can't join the Communists."

So I joined the Socialist party, but I must say that during the 1930s, I was a fellow traveler, I really was. I was disgusted with both the Communists and the Socialists for spending so much time fighting each other. I would go to a Communist meeting, a public meeting, and the Socialists would be there heckling them. Then I would go to a Socialist meeting and the Communists would be there heckling them. They each had their own way of singing the International: one would say "The International party shall be the whole human race," and the other said, "The International soviet shall be the human race."

I was very strongly pro-Russian, and I can remember when I was at Milwaukee State Teachers College listening to a Jewish doctor who had just come back from the Soviet Union; he talked to us. The school had Communist party meetings and the Young Peoples' Communist Party right in the school--it was nothing. Nobody was worked up about it the way we got later on.

Anyway, this doctor had just come back from the Soviet Union, and he said, "Everything is wonderful. It really is working!" and I believed it. At lunchtime, we used to go down to a basement room and have our bag lunches there and sit around, literally plotting the revolution, or at least I was listening to them plotting the revolution.

Lage: Nonviolent?

Stamp: No, I was sitting with some guys who had joined the Communist party, the Young Communists, and they would talk about how they could seize Washington and this sort of thing. This was serious stuff, at least it seemed terribly serious at that time.

Lage: Like a real possibility.

Stamp: Yes. So when I left Milwaukee State Teachers College and went to Madison, I still went regularly to Communist party--Young Communists had meetings in the student union.

Lage: Very openly.

Stamp: Oh, yes, there was nothing secret about this. They were open. The Communist party headquarters in Milwaukee was open. I could walk in and sit and talk to people and get their literature, and I

did. I can't ever remember anybody making any great issue of it at that time.

So when I went to Madison, I still was very radical and still, I thought, a fellow traveler. Even when World War II broke out, I was--well, I've got a lot to tell you about that--but I was opposed to Roosevelt's foreign policy until Germany attacked the Soviet Union, and then I switched.

Lage: You mentioned being a pacifist. Did that grow out of the family politics?

Stampp: I don't know how I got to be a pacifist, but I read a lot of pacifist literature when I was at Milwaukee State Teachers College. I can remember a pacifist named Kirby Page, and I can't remember the title of his book, but he had quite an impact on me. So I was a Socialist, I was a pacifist. I can remember when I got to Madison there was an officers' club of the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]--you know what the ROTC is. They used to have a military ball every spring. I remember one year participating in a pacifist parade, helping to build a pacifist float to protest against this--the Scabbard and Blade, that was the name of this military group at that time.

Lage: What were your attitudes towards the New Deal?

Stampp: When I was old enough to vote--and the first time was in 1936--I voted for Norman Thomas. To me, Roosevelt was not nearly radical enough. He was simply bolstering the capitalist system, and that didn't interest me. On the other hand, in the election of 1936 when Roosevelt ran against Alf Landon, I was hoping, hoping that Roosevelt would win.

Lage: Would win over Landon. I thought maybe you wanted a disaster.

Stampp: No, no, I wasn't that kind of a nihilist where I would say, "Everything's got to go to hell before it can get better." No, I wanted Roosevelt to win the election.

In Milwaukee State Teachers College, incidentally, in 1932, we had a big forum. This was the whole college. Of four members of the faculty, one supported William C. Foster, the Communist party's candidate; one supported Norman Thomas, that was my history teacher; one supported Roosevelt; and one economist supported Hoover. We had a student straw poll, and Roosevelt came in first, Norman Thomas came in second, William C. Foster came in third, and Hoover came in fourth.

Lage: Was Thomas a close second or a distant second?

Stampp: I can't remember. but I remember the result: Roosevelt first, Thomas second, Foster third, and Hoover--there were just no Hoover supporters in that school. It was really a proletarian institution.

Lage: Yes, even though you hated it.

Stampp: Well, I liked that part of it.

Lage: You liked the politics.

Stampp: I liked my lunches and the meetings there. I had a couple of romances, too, that made it bearable, but my interests were elsewhere at that time--I spent my time writing the great American novel.

Lage: Have you finished it?

Stampp: I think I wrote seven or eight chapters of it, and mercifully the manuscript has long since disappeared.

II UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, 1933-1941

[Interview 10: January 21, 1997] ##¹

The Madison Campus in the Thirties

Lage: We left you just starting out at the University of Wisconsin in 1933. What was Madison like in the thirties?

Stampp: I still feel very nostalgic about Madison in the 1930s. I went out there in February of 1933 as the American economy seemed to be in total collapse, the banks were collapsing, and there was a wonderful atmosphere at the very beginning. Roosevelt closed the banks right after his inauguration, and suddenly we were all broke; nobody had any money. The restaurants where I started to eat, and where others had eaten for a while, began letting us eat on credit. It didn't last very long, but there was just that feeling--like some great disaster where suddenly all the good that's in everybody comes out, and--

Lage: So there was a sense of community?

Stampp: A sense of community, and we're all in the same boat, and so on.

Lage: That must have been nice, especially since you were coming with so little in the way of financial support.

Stampp: That's right. I mean, they were suddenly down at my level. [laughter] Most of them.

Madison, I think, in 1933 must have had a population of about 75,000. It was an interesting and beautiful city. It was the state capital, of course, so there was the whole political

¹Interview 10 was a make-up session to replace the material covered in Interview 2 which was lost due to a recording malfunction.

structure of the state there, as well as the university. There were no other campuses at that time; it was Madison, and there was a whole network of state teachers colleges, but no other branch of the university.

The student population was about 6,000, and the student body then was certainly not like Madison now. Very few black students. I can't remember any Hispanic students; there must have been some, but I can't remember them. Quite a number of students came from the East Coast. At that time, some of those states didn't have state universities, and Madison was a good deal. I don't know what out-of-state fees were, but mine were thirty-two dollars a semester. I'm sure that out-of-state fees weren't very high.

Lage: It was probably cheaper than going to a private college closer to home.

Stampp: Yes. And quite a number of bright Jewish students from the East Coast came to Madison, not only in graduate school, but quite a few of them as undergraduates, as well as a great number of them in graduate school. The campus was spacious, lots of open space, right on the edge of Lake Mendota. It's not that way any more. All the space has been filled with buildings. The last time I went there, I was appalled at what had happened. The student body now is somewhere between 35,000 and 40,000.

Lage: They let it grow larger than Berkeley did.

Stampp: They let it grow, right, and it was only relatively recently, post-World War II, really the sixties, when they began opening new campuses. The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, was Milwaukee State Teachers College, and then it was converted into a campus. And there's a scattering of campuses all over the state now.

Wisconsin's faculty was very good, probably one of the best faculties in what we always called the Big Ten, you know, the Midwestern universities--Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, so on.

Lage: Is this across the board, or in history?

Stampp: Well, they had a very good agricultural school. They had a good economics department. The history department had a very good reputation. The university faculty was never very well paid. The legislature was always rather stingy. The state was largely agricultural, and fairly con--it's funny; I was going to say conservative, although the LaFollette progressive tradition was very strong there. But as far as subsidizing the university is concerned, the legislature was rather stingy.

I think it was partly the result of rural conservatism and suspicion of the university as a rather freewheeling, radical place, and then a very strong contingency of legislators from Milwaukee, many of them Catholics, whose loyalty really was to Marquette University, a private Catholic institution. So the university had trouble hanging on to faculty, because the salary scale was not very good. But they had some very distinguished people there, and I was impressed at the time with the history department.

John Hicks was the senior man in American history. He had come from the University of Nebraska to Madison just a year or two before I got there. My mentor, William B. Hesseltine, had come from the University of Chattanooga just the year before. He was really a replacement for Carl Russell Fish, who died in 1932, who had been a fairly distinguished American historian in Western history and recent American history. Hicks was a replacement for Frederic Paxson, who left Wisconsin to take a chair at Berkeley.

Hesseltine was a young man of about thirty-two or thirty-three, a strange-looking man. He must have been about five feet five, rather rotund, with a gravelly, deep voice, always having an underslung, sort of Sherlock Holmes, pipe in his mouth. In some ways, a rather frightening person, rather intimidating person, but very stimulating.

I confronted him almost immediately. I was assigned to him as my advisor. As an advisor, he was utterly worthless. He had just arrived the semester before I did, and he told me he didn't know anything about university administration, and so I pretty much handled my own advising or got help from others.

Lage: When you say you confronted him, you mean you--

Stamp: I was sent to him. I was sent to him so that he could advise me about courses I should take, and I sort of worked that out myself. I made a few mistakes that I had to remedy later on about courses I was supposed to take and didn't.

I was a major in history, but I was also trying to get a teaching credential. I still wanted to teach high school. So I had to take quite a number of courses in the School of Education--History of Education, Secondary Education, one terrible course I remember called Diagnostic and Remedial Teaching, which I found almost worthless. The best part of that was practice teaching, which I did in my senior year at the University High School.

Do you want me to talk about Madison, the way it was at that time?

Lage: I think it would be interesting to get a picture of that.

Stampp: Well, I came from a much bigger city, but Madison to me was much more exciting. The university was a tremendous influence on this relatively small city, and then the state capital was there, and state politics in the 1930s was very interesting, and the LaFollette brothers were there. Phil LaFollette was governor part of the time that I was there, and his brother [Robert M.] was in the United States Senate and would stay there until he was finally defeated by McCarthy in the forties.

Lage: Did the students have an awareness of the politics going on in the state?

Stampp: Oh, yes. The atmosphere was progressive and liberal. I'm sure there were plenty of conservative students there, but the atmosphere was very liberal. There weren't many critics of the New Deal from the right; there were lots of them from the left, where I stood at that time.

I remember a northern Wisconsin politician named John B. Chappell. He was the editor of a newspaper in some small city in northern Wisconsin, and was really a McCarthy born twenty years too soon. He ran for governor or United States Senate; I think it was the Senate, and he went around the state mouthing right-wing generalities about the university and about the country, and he was sort of the laughing-stock. The students loved to turn out when he came to Madison and just laugh while he spoke about communism on the campus, and free love, and--

Lage: Wow, it sounds so modern.

Stampp: Yes, yes. His line was really like McCarthy's later. The one difference was that McCarthy never attacked the University of Wisconsin. I don't understand why not, but he didn't. He left the university alone. Chappell used the university as sort of his focus of what's wrong with society, and it all had to do with communism and sexual promiscuity at the university. He was just funny. The students loved to come out and listen to him, but he got nowhere in politics. He would have been wonderful twenty years later, I suppose.

Professors Hesselstine, Nettels, Otto, and Perlman

Lage: Tell me more about Hesselstine and other faculty members at Madison who may have influenced you.

Stampp: I had no doubt after meeting Hesseltine that he was the man I wanted to work with.

Lage: And what attracted you to him?

Stampp: Well, he was the most dynamic American historian there. Perhaps not the most profound, but certainly the most dynamic. Hicks, by comparison, was rather drab. I always thought of him as the man in grey; his complexion was sort of grey, and he wore grey suits. There was a certain quiet charm about him, and I took courses from him in Western history and recent American history. But Hesseltine, the first course I took from him was American constitutional history, and he was a Beardian. One of the first things he had us read was Beard's economic interpretation of the constitution, and in those Marxist days, this made sense to me.

Lage: That was your first exposure to Beard?

Stampp: No, I had used Beard--my professor at Milwaukee State Teachers College had used Beard's *Rise of American Civilization* as our textbook, so I knew about Beard, but I had not read his economic interpretation of the constitution, or his economic interpretation of Jeffersonian democracy. The way he explained the framing of the constitution was largely in terms of the economic interests of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention: how many bonds they owned, and how much land they owned, and their mercantile interests, and so on. That to him seemed a sufficient explanation for the counter-revolution.

Hesseltine bought it, and he sold it. I was convinced that this was a satisfactory explanation for the nature of the constitution and for the motives of its framers.

He had a wonderful lecture style. He was witty, he was clever, his lectures were full of humor. Challenging, sometimes outrageous generalizations. But I was rather young and naive then, and he seemed to me awfully exciting.

Lage: Did he allow you to challenge his outrageous generalizations? Or encourage refinement?

Stampp: There was no discussion in these lectures. He lectured, and we listened. For a while, I was scared to death of him. I thought he was wonderful, but I was afraid of him.

The next term, in the fall, I started taking his year course in the history of the old South and the sectional conflict and Civil War and Reconstruction, and that's what really excited me. He was a southerner himself; he came from Virginia, but he was a

kind of southern maverick at the time. He always claimed that the men who ran the--and they were men at that time, mostly--the Southern Historical Association would have nothing to do with him. He was never elected president of the Southern Historical Association, and he claimed that it was because he was just too much of a rebel.

Lage: What other faculty made an impression?

Stampp: Curtis Nettels taught a course in American economic history and a course in American colonial history. He was essentially a colonialist. I took both his economic history course and his colonial history course. I was offering colonial history as one of my five fields. Nettels, when I first encountered him, I think it was in his economic history course, was a disciple of Frederick Jackson Turner. His interpretation of American economic growth was basically a Turnerian one, with the emphasis on the West and economic stimulus that the West and the settlement of the West gave to the whole American economy.

In the summer, I think it was the summer of 1934, Curtis Nettels was converted to Marxism, and I won't go into detail. A scholar named Lewis Hacker, who was a Marxist, came to Madison that summer and influenced him. The following year, I took his American colonial history, and it was a Marxist interpretation of American colonial history. By the end of the thirties Nettels had abandoned his Marxism.

Lage: So this was a passing few years.

Stampp: Yes, he went from his Turnerian interpretation of history to Marx, and he left Madison to go to Cornell about 1941, '42, and by that time, he'd abandoned his Marxism. So it was a passing phase, but at the time, I was very impressed with his interpretation. He was writing a textbook on American colonial history, and though not in any really overt way, you could get the undertone of Marxism through the book.

I liked Nettels and found his course very stimulating, but personally, he was a rather difficult person. Very shy, and when one encountered him, it was always very difficult, because one never knew how to terminate a conversation with him. There were always awkward pauses. But he was one of the really good people that I studied with.

Lage: Did his enthusiasm for Marxism have an effect on you?

Stamp: Well, I was a Marxist already, so he was simply a historian who had seen the light that I presumably had seen several years earlier.

Hesseltine would be rather hard to classify. He was a Beardian, I think; he was never a Marxist. He was always very strongly anticommunist, as a matter of fact. He was a member of the Socialist party, and like most socialists, hated the communists.

He was rather hard to classify. A Beardian, I guess, is as close as you could get to giving him a label at that time.

Lage: Let's see, you mentioned Max Otto to me, and your philosophy minor?

Stamp: Well, yes. I remember Max Otto as one of the--Wisconsin did have a reputation among conservatives as being a radical institution, and it didn't deserve it. The faculty was not terribly radical. Max Otto was one of the mavericks who was thought of as a radical, along with John R. Commons, who had retired by this time and had been merely an advocate of trade unionism, an AF of L trade unionist, rather conservative. There was a handful of sort of maverick professors there, among whom was Max Otto in the Philosophy Department, who taught a famous course called Man and Nature, which I took and enjoyed very much. It ranged over a whole variety of philosophical problems, and somehow, it even got into evolution. Being Max Otto, he even challenged the theory of evolution and made us think about the flaws in the argument.

Lage: Did he have a replacement theory? He wasn't going back to the Bible or--

Stamp: No. What he was doing was challenging his students, who almost universally accepted the theory of evolution as the origin of species. He just wanted them to think about it a bit more. So he raised a lot of questions. So here's this man who has a reputation for radicalism making us think about--and in a relatively conservative way--about evolution.

Lage: When you say man and nature, I think about Aldo Leopold, who I think was on the campus then.

Stamp: I didn't know him at all. I knew Commons's successor, Selig Perlman, who was sort of a disciple of John R. Commons and a strong believer in trade unionism, which was a very conservative kind of unionism at that time. He accepted Commons's idea that American labor was not class-conscious, that the only successful way to organize American labor was in skilled craft unions--in

other words, industrial workers in mass production industries they apparently felt weren't likely to be good material for labor organizing.

Lage: These men were not Marxists.

Stampp: Oh, heavens no, heavens no. Actually, I took a field with Selig Perlman, it was something called Socialism and Capitalism, and read a lot of Lenin and Marx, and also their critics. But what I got from Selig Perlman was the position that the whole Marxist intellectual edifice simply didn't apply to the United States. The United States was very different. American labor was not class-conscious. I know it was during the thirties when I was taking Selig Perlman's lecture course and then a seminar with him, the CIO began organizing industrial workers, and I can remember him saying, "It just isn't going to be successful." He had a very thick Polish-Jewish accent, and he would--I remember him one day talking about the CIO saying, "It von't verk; it's a flash in the pan. It simply von't verk." [laughter]

Lage: Was he convincing? Here you came with a Marxist outlook and--

Stampp: No, he wasn't convincing. I mean, what was happening in labor at the time, in the automobile industry, in the steel industry, in the coal industry and so on, it was--it was really undermining the whole Commons-Perlman theory of the labor movement in the United States.

Lage: Right before their eyes, and your eyes.

Stampp: Yes. In 1933 when I first went to Madison, I had to take a survey course in economics, introduction to economics. It was taught by a classical economist by the name of [William Henry] Kiekhofer. Here the banking system was in virtual collapse, Roosevelt was introducing and getting Congress to pass a lot of New Deal measures. And I went through the whole term without the man ever referring to Roosevelt, teaching a standard course in classical economics, just as if he was unaware of what was going on in the world around him at the time. It was an amazing thing. And I remember, this was a big lecture course, and like our big courses at Berkeley, it was broken up into discussion sessions once a week. My teaching assistant was a socialist. [laughs] It was in our discussion sections that we talked about what was going on in the world, not in the lectures.

It was a very liberal group of students in my discussion section. I remember one Republican in the class, a member of an Iowa family that manufactured Maytag washing machines. He was the one dissenter in that class.

Depression Era Students at Wisconsin

- Lage: Were there contrasts or comparisons with the classrooms here in Berkeley in the sixties, and the Vietnam era in particular I'm thinking about, where I remember students thinking that the classroom studies weren't relevant to all this turmoil going on outside?
- Stampp: Yes. There's a major difference. Madison was a much more open place, and the times were different too. I came out here after the war, of course. But the young communists met in the student union at Madison. They had open meetings; I used to go to them. And the socialists had their meetings; well, the socialists aren't all that dangerous anyway. And I used to be appalled at the time the Communists and Socialists wasted attacking each other, and having their own ways of singing "The International," and trying to outshout each other. But--
- Lage: There was more freedom of speech?
- Stampp: Much more freedom of speech. All of these meetings took place in a wonderful student union.
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- Stampp: And when I came out here, to Berkeley, communists were not allowed to speak on campus. This no-communist rule was adopted about 1940 here, if I remember correctly. It was pre-World War II I know, and it was still in force in the forties and fifties.
- Lage: I was thinking also of the Vietnam era protests, and ethnic studies protests, where students complained that classes were irrelevant, almost.
- Stampp: No, I don't think that was the feeling at Wisconsin. You know, the Depression had the effect of--I think most students felt very lucky to be going to the university at this time. Jobs were hard to find, there was massive unemployment, and there was a kind of academic seriousness about students, compared to, say, the 1950s here, where it seemed to me that, with the country relatively prosperous, there wasn't that kind of student anxiety. In the thirties, students were wondering, What are you going to do when you get out of the university? Especially in the field that I was in. I intended to go into teaching, and there just were no teaching jobs, or there were hardly any.

There was no war to protest against, at least in the early thirties. There were nothing like the Vietnam protests of the

sixties. There were antimilitary protests; there were lots of students who resented having the ROTC on the campus, the Reserve Officers Training Program. I believe I told you about taking part in a peace parade on the evening that the officers of the ROTC had their military ball. A friend of mine and I prepared a float for this peace parade. There was an organization called Scabbard and Blade, which was an organization of the officers of the ROTC, student officers.

Lage: I don't remember your talking about this.

Stamp: They always had a big ball in the student union once a year, and that's what we were protesting against. Lots of indignation about the involvement of the United States in the First World War. These were the years of revelations about the alleged roles of bankers and armament manufacturers, the "merchants of death," and of British propaganda in getting the U.S. involved in the war. I remember a book called *Words that Won the War*, about the insidious maneuverings and machinations of pro-British propagandists in the United States. It was a time of real disillusionment about our involvement in the First World War, particularly in view of what was going on in Europe then, the rise of Hitler and Mussolini and so on. The famous Nye Committee was investigating; I remember hearing [Senator Gerald P.] Nye speak and being tremendously impressed at what he had to say about how we got into the war and how the special interests were responsible for it. The general feeling was, Never again. That's when the neutrality legislation was being passed by Congress and approved, probably somewhat reluctantly, by Roosevelt.

But this didn't lead to great demonstrations. I can't think of anything like the Vietnam protests here. Certainly there was, to the best of my knowledge, no major movement of protest against the university itself. The university was sacrosanct; I mean, this was one of the good things about American society at that time. The idea that we're going to bring the whole university down and, you know, the things that happened here in the 1960s, that just didn't happen. It wasn't happening anywhere.

Lage: They didn't focus on the university as the evil--

Stamp: They didn't focus on the universities themselves. I mean, you might grumble about one thing or another about the university, but the idea that the students ought to run the universities or have representation on the board of regents, I think that these were-- [laughter]

Lage: It wouldn't have occurred to you.

Stampp: These were ideas that never occurred to us at that time.

Lage: Did people attack the regents for being wealthy--?

Stampp: No.

Lage: You didn't apply a Beardian interpretation to the university.

Stampp: I can't remember any--the regents were pretty loyal to the university and did their best to get appropriations from the state legislature. There was a lot of unhappiness about the legislature's behavior, but that simply wasn't the time for an attack on the structure of the university itself.

Lage: Or the educational system. It sounds like you still had the seriousness of purpose about your studies.

Stampp: Yes. I remember, as far as the history graduate program was concerned, students feeling that the examinations were inhuman, and we might have thought, well, if we ran the department, this would change. You know, students would have feelings about one professor or another, but I can't remember lumping the history faculty together and saying, "We ought to have major changes here." I really can't think of an occasion in the 1930s when there was a protest of any kind against the university.

The Fraternity Experience, and a Romance

Lage: You mentioned to me that you had joined a fraternity. What was that experience like?

Stampp: Well, that's a phase of my life that I've thought about a lot. Everything in my political orientation would have indicated that I would have nothing to do with fraternities, and when I went to Madison, I didn't know much about fraternity life. In the fall of 1933--my second semester at Madison--in a lecture course I sat next to a young man whose name I can't remember. We got to know each other and talk about the course and whatnot. He invited me suddenly one day to come and have dinner at his fraternity house. I did, and the fraternity house was located on Lake Mendota on Langdon Street, which was where all the fraternities and sororities were located.

It was really very impressive. It was a big, beautiful house, right on the lake, and I was impressed. I guess fraternities were in a bad way at that time, too, because I

certainly wasn't, as I think of it, the material that fraternities were ordinarily looking for.

Anyway, I went and had dinner, and was invited back a second time, and several of the members of the fraternity sat with me in a room somewhere and asked me if I'd like to pledge. I said, "I can't afford it."

Lage: Was it a pretty expensive commitment?

Stampp: Well, it was more expensive than living as I was living before. But somehow, I got interested, I thought this would be a great place to live, and--not that the interests of these fraternity brothers were exactly the interests of mine. None of them shared my interest in classical music. They were less academically oriented than I was. But there was something in me, maybe it grew out of my own background, that made me think this would be a thing I'd like to do.

And so I got in touch, not with my parents but with my aunt Selma, and told her how much extra it would cost. It sounds like a trivial amount now, but at that time, it was a lot. I think it was something like seventeen dollars a month more. I told her it was Theta Xi fraternity. Incidentally, it was not one of the most distinguished fraternities by any means. She got in touch with her employers, that famous Keikhafer family that I spoke of, and they thought it would be a good idea.

Lage: Interesting that they were kind of watching after you.

Stampp: Yes. And so she wrote back and said she'd send me the extra money, so I joined. My roommate, Bob Baldwin, joined also; they brought him to dinner. So we joined together and continued to be roommates there. And I must say, I did enjoy it. I enjoyed the dances and parties. It was a way to relax on weekends. So I really had two lives out there. There was this social life through the fraternity, and then my academic life with a whole different set of friends.

Lage: And what about your political life?

Stampp: My political life was the same. It was while I was a member of the fraternity that I--in fact, it was another young man at the fraternity who, with me, organized or built that peace float.

Lage: Oh, I see, so you weren't the only one who had radical political views.

Stampp: There was one other in that fraternity house who shared my views, but the rest of them by and large didn't. There were Democrats among them, but none of them had the radical orientation. I was always kind of a maverick in the fraternity. They thought I was kind of odd. I was getting very good grades, and the fraternities always got reports of how the members were doing academically, and I was always the top member of the fraternity.

Lage: So you were helping their grade average.

Stampp: Well, I was, and ultimately I was elected president of the fraternity. I was president for my last term out there, and I was in charge--this was a terrible mistake--I was in charge one term of finding new pledges for the fraternity, and I was not very good at that. But it was a funny part of my life, and when I graduated, that was it. I've never had anything to do with the fraternity since then.

Lage: Do you think it had an influence on you of a lasting nature?

Stampp: Perhaps, in one way. I think that I was kind of a reserved, shy person; I think it helped me in a way to learn how to deal with people, different kinds of people. I think that was the lasting benefit. Somehow fraternities always keep track of their members. I have no idea how they found out where I lived. When I move, I never tell them. But the Theta Xi fraternity chapter in Berkeley finally was notified that I was here, and so some time in the fifties, the fraternity invited me to come to dinner, and they asked me to talk--it was near the beginning of the integration controversy. They asked me to talk to them about segregation in Alabama, something like that. I said, "No, I don't want to talk to you about that. I'll talk about segregation in Berkeley if you like." So, after dinner, I talked about racism in Berkeley. I looked at this sea of white faces, and I remember saying, "When are you going to pledge a black student?" Maybe I said "Negro" at that point. I can remember a voice from the back, "Not in a thousand years." I was never invited back. [laughter]

Lage: Of course, there weren't that many black students at the university then.

Stampp: There weren't all that many, but there were some. But that was the end of my contact with Theta Xi fraternity.

Lage: The other topic I see here that we haven't covered is meeting Mary [Rulkotter Dearing] from Chattanooga.

Stampp: All right. In the fall of 1933, in William B. Hesseltine's course in constitutional history, I saw a very attractive blonde woman

who was in graduate school. I don't remember ever talking to her during that term, but I noticed that several other graduate student males sort of fluttered around her. She was very attractive--two and a half years older than I was. She had graduated from the University of Chattanooga, had got an M.A. at Washington University in St. Louis, and was in Madison to work for a Ph.D. with Hesselstine. I was a senior, and she was a second-year graduate student with a master's degree.

Lage: Had she been attracted to Wisconsin by Hesselstine, or something about Hesselstine?

Stamp: Well, she had known Hesselstine at the University of Chattanooga. She had followed him up there to work with him.

Anyway, I got into the fraternity, and in January of 1934, there was to be a fraternity dance. I don't know how I did it, but I screwed up my courage, called her on the telephone and introduced myself, and asked her to come to the dance. To my astonishment, she said yes. I was just terribly impressed with her. Here was a woman getting a Ph.D. in history, and I thought, There's the Mary part of Charles and Mary Beard.

Lage: [laughs] You were going to be Charles.

Stamp: Yes, I was going to be Charles, and she was going to be Mary. So we started dating, and I really did fall in love with her; anyway, I thought I did. And apparently, she did with me. That fall, the fall of 1934, we were engaged to be married. In those days, you gave your fiancée your fraternity pin if you couldn't afford a diamond, and so I gave her mine.

It was in retrospect a silly undergraduate sort of thing, but we were very serious about getting married. I had very romantic ideas about what the marriage would be like. We were going to be Charles and Mary Beard. [laughter] We were going to write history together. I remember telling the man who ultimately became my major professor that I couldn't imagine marrying a woman who wasn't interested in writing history.

Then she had to go off in the spring of 1935 to Washington, D.C. to do research on her dissertation. She went home to Chattanooga during the summer, so I didn't see her for about six months. The following year, I took a teaching job in a high school about forty miles outside of Madison. I would see her on weekends, but during the week I was off on the job. Then the year after that, 1936-1937, she got a traveling fellowship and spent the whole year in Washington.

That's the year when everything went sour, because she met an economist at the Brookings Institute who was the right age for her and fell in love. Unfortunately she came back to Madison in the fall of 1937 and was there for the whole academic year of '37-'38, writing her dissertation and getting ready for her final oral exam. I spent much of the year trying to persuade her to forget the man she had met in Washington, not successfully, and in the late summer of '38, she married him.

Lage: Now, was that something you were able to put to one side and continue with your studies?

Stampp: I kept working; I was a teaching assistant. It was a blow, but I kept up with my work, nevertheless.

Lage: I remember your saying it was a mistake from the beginning.

Stampp: Well, it was a mistake, because she was obviously going to get out of graduate school, and presumably get a teaching job somewhere, while I would still be in graduate school for a couple more years. She finished in 1938, and I didn't finish, because of interruptions, teaching high school for a year and so on--I didn't get my degree until 1941.

Lage: Was it unusual to have women in graduate school then?

Stampp: There weren't many. In addition to Mary, another woman came to Hesseltine with an M.A. degree and said she'd like to work with him. Hesseltine--I remember, because I was in his office at the time--said to her, "Why should I take you on? All you're going to do is get married, and I will have wasted all this time having you work with me for a Ph.D." She didn't work with him. Imagine what would happen to a professor today talking that way!

The Graduate Program in History at Madison

[Interview 2: April 16, 1996] ##

Stampp: I finished my undergraduate work in February 1935 and went right on to graduate work. Now I have to tell you a little something about the graduate program at Wisconsin. At Berkeley, you do have a major professor, and you presumably have gone through his seminar at least once. Your major professor is responsible for your dissertation work, along with a couple of other people, but he's the primary figure. At Wisconsin at that time, when you

decided to work with somebody, you were tied to him more securely. You were expected to attend his seminar semester after semester so long as you were in graduate school.

That ultimately led to some problems with Hesselstine. He was stimulating, but after being in his seminar, I would say two terms, I thought I had learned what I could learn from him about historical criticism and about his philosophy of history, and after that, it just got tedious.

Lage: Did the seminars have a different topic each year?

Stamp: The seminars were largely seminars of people either writing M.A. theses or Ph.D. theses with the man who ran the seminar. You had to have one seminar with another man, so there might be one or two people in the seminar who were there to fulfill that requirement, but largely, it was a dissertation seminar. At Wisconsin you wrote a master's thesis as well as a doctoral dissertation, so the seminar reports were pretty much on the progress of your research.

To me, eventually, it not only became awfully boring but also a time consumer, because I had to prepare a seminar report rather than getting on with my research, and that always took time. We spoke for two hours in one of these seminars, or you had to be prepared to, and there were a lot of questions. That was one of the bad things about the Wisconsin system, I thought.

Also, one had to offer five fields, and they were huge fields. My five fields consisted of American history in the national period, 1776 to the present; the second was American colonial history; the third one was English history from Anglo-Saxon times to the present, including the history of the British Empire; and the fourth field was modern European history, 1500 to the present. These were enormous fields, and you were supposed to be responsible for European history from Russia to France--not Great Britain, that was separate.

Lage: These were not even your specialization field.

Stamp: No, but these were fields that you had to take written exams in, and the written exams, when you got around to doing them, would take up about a two-week period. You picked up your exam at nine o'clock in the morning, and you wrote until five in the afternoon, in these four fields.

Then there was a fifth field when you were taking your so-called written qualifying exam. That was historiography, and that exam began at nine in the morning one day and didn't end until

noon the following day, so you had twenty-four to thirty hours or something like that.

Lage: It's quite a vision of what a person would be expected to accomplish.

Stampp: It was horrible, it was just horrible.

Lage: Even the nature of the historical enterprise--to think you could become an expert in all these fields.

Stampp: Right. So how did one prepare? Well, I audited courses in English Constitutional history and took a seminar in the history of the British Empire. I remember writing a seminar paper on an Australian statesman who was involved in the unification of Australia in the late nineteenth century. I audited a couple of courses in modern European history, but mostly it was independent reading. During the years that I prepared for them, I read histories of the Balkans, histories of Russia, histories of Germany, histories of Spain and Portugal, and histories of Italy.

Lage: Would you prepare in one area, then take that exam and go to another?

Stampp: No, you took them all within a course of two weeks. Let's say I took American history first, then it was modern European history a couple of days later, then colonial history, then English history, and then you had historiography.

Lage: So this had to all be prepared and in your head at one time.

Stampp: It all had to be prepared in your head, and of course before you took them, you had to pass language exams in French and German, and I had never had any French. Fortunately, the language exams were simply reading exams, and I learned to read French on my own. I got a French grammar book and a French dictionary, and de Toqueville's history of the background of the French revolution, and just started reading.

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Lage: Was there anything positive that you can think of in your development about this kind of program?

Stampp: About the graduate program?

Lage: About having to have such extensive knowledge in such a wide range of areas.

Stampp: Well, obviously, it was a good thing. I've sort of lived on what I learned in graduate school in these fields, in which I've done very limited reading since then. Early in my career, I actually had to teach a course in European diplomacy from the Franco-Prussian War to the First World War, and obviously it helped me. I also taught a course in English history one time early in my career. So it did help in that way.

I don't think there was another graduate school in the United States that had as killing an examination process. My feeling is that Wisconsin always thought of itself as a rival of Harvard, and Wisconsin was going to be tougher than Harvard, and it certainly was in examining. I can't think of any other reason to explain it, and it's changed since I left there.

Lage: That sounds just grueling.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: So once you passed these, then did you focus on your dissertation?

Stampp: Once you passed your qualifying exams, then you focused on your dissertation. After you finished your dissertation, you still had to take a two-hour oral exam. That was not terribly hard.

Lage: Was that defending your dissertation?

Stampp: Not really. There were always people representing my fields, English history and European history, but not in my case colonial history, because if you wrote a first-rate exam, you got what was called a quittance, and you didn't have to be examined in it. I did that in colonial history. In your major field you were always going to be examined, so you couldn't get a quittance. I'll explain why I didn't get a quittance in European history later on.

I loved graduate school, I really did. I look back with great nostalgia to Madison in the thirties. It was a wonderful place. I really did like graduate school and got to know people who were lifetime friends during those years.

Master's Thesis on Antislavery in the South

Stampp: I had to pick a thesis topic immediately when I started graduate work, and I picked as the subject of my master's thesis the antislavery movement in the South. That was my first experience with research into important primary sources. I found a number of

Southern antislavery newspapers, mostly in border states like Kentucky and Missouri. The Wisconsin Historical Society had files.

I should tell you, incidentally, that the library of the Wisconsin Historical Society was on the university campus. In fact, at that time, the university library and the Wisconsin Historical Society library were in the same building. So in American history, the best library was the Wisconsin Historical Society rather than the university library.

Lage: Was it a broader collection than Wisconsin?

Stamp: Oh, yes. The Wisconsin Historical Society had and still has wonderful manuscript collections, not just for Wisconsin but for other states, and fine newspaper files. As I said, I was able to find the files of Southern antislavery newspapers there. These papers were usually of short duration. One in Lexington, Kentucky, for example, was published for about a year, then a mob broke in and destroyed the presses, and that was the end of that newspaper.

There were also manumission societies in North Carolina and Virginia, and I had the published minutes of the North Carolina Antislavery Society. So in Madison, I found I didn't have to travel. I found enough to write a decent 150-page thesis on the antislavery movement.

Lage: Was that a topic that Hesseltine would have guided you to, or did he leave it up to you?

Stamp: No, I picked it myself. I don't remember how--I must have read something about antislavery sentiment in the Old South. The Southern critics of slavery were largely Quakers; there were antislavery organizations in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee--not in the Deep South, where organized antislavery was impossible. Antislavery Southerners advocated gradual, compensated emancipation, and then the colonization of the emancipated slaves somewhere outside the United States, back to Africa or wherever. That was the kind of movement they supported.

I wouldn't say that I wrote a great master's thesis. This was my first experience writing a really long essay. I had written term papers of fifteen pages, twenty pages. This was about 150 pages, and I had a lot to learn about writing.

Outside of resenting having to go to Hesseltine's seminars every term, this is when I first was a little disappointed in my

major professor. He read my master's thesis, but I didn't get much advice from him about what was good about it or what was bad about it. I didn't get much help from him about literary composition.

Lage: Even with these weekly seminars.

Stamp: No. I would hear him make comments in the seminar, but when I handed him my master's thesis--I assume he read it--I thought I should get a long letter from him about what's good, what's bad about it, and stylistic matters, and it just wasn't there. I was almost self-taught as far as learning how to write was concerned.

Lage: You certainly knew what you wanted. I mean, there are those who don't really work so hard at the literary craftsmanship part of it.

Stamp: Yes. I'll say a little more about that later on when I speak of my relationship with another graduate student.

Anyway, there was a break. I did one semester of graduate work from February to June of 1935. I stayed in Madison that summer and was working on my thesis. In the fall of 1935, I went back to Madison and started my second semester, but I had no money. I had applied for a teaching assistantship, but I didn't get it. It was too early; I was applying before I had really got very far in graduate work.

So what I did get was an NYA job from the National Youth Administration which paid fifteen dollars a month. My job was checking bibliography for John D. Hicks' textbook. That was pretty tedious, but it was a way of making a living.

I worked at this NYA job for a few weeks in September of 1935, but I really didn't know how I was going to get by. I couldn't ask my parents for any more help; they had helped me through my undergraduate work, and I was getting some help from my aunt Selma.

A Teaching Position at Milton High School

Stamp: The teacher placement office in late September called me in and told me that somebody who was teaching at Milton High School in the little village, Milton, of about 2,100, had just taken another job in a bigger city, and there was an opening to teach American

and European history, and would I like to have it? I went down and had an interview. I had no money, so I decided to take it.

Lage: Was this close by Madison?

Stamp: It was forty miles away, and there was wonderful train service between them. The job paid \$1,035 for a year, and I saved \$300 out of that during the year. I found a rooming house on the edge of the Milton College campus, and I think room and board was something like six and a half dollars a week. Out of \$1,000, I could afford a certain amount of entertainment. So for the first time in my life, I had a bank account.

Lage: Yes, \$300 was a lot at that time.

Stamp: Yes, \$300 was a lot.

I found it hard to adjust to Milton. I mean, the fact that it was dominated by Seventh-Day Baptists didn't bother me, but I had never lived in a small town before. Madison had a population of 75,000, and there was a big university, and it was the state capital, so there was always a lot going on there. Milwaukee was a half million, and here's a little town of 2,000.

Lage: How large did that make the high school? It drew from the surrounding area?

Stamp: Yes, it drew a lot of kids off the farms around there. It must have had 500 students, something like that. I remember there was no home mail delivery there, so I would have to go down to the post office to pick up mail. I always felt when walking down the street that there was someone standing at every window looking at me as I was going by. Always in front of the post office, there were some loafers sitting there staring at you when you went in to get your mail. I had never had that experience before. If you were a teacher, their eyes were on you even more.

Lage: Did you feel constrained about what kind of political views you could express?

Stamp: It wasn't really an issue. I taught a civics course, and there was probably some kind of a radical twist to it, but I can't remember it now. European history was the awful kind you taught with a textbook. They got assignments in the textbook every day, and you asked them questions about what they had read.

Lage: But not necessarily about issues that were, in the interwar years, hot issues?

Stamp: No, not very much. American history was a senior course, and it was very Beardian American history I was teaching them. I had a terrible textbook, I can't remember what it was, but it was not Beard. I didn't have a choice on that.

I escaped every weekend. On Friday I would go home for lunch to my rooming house, and I would carry my suitcase back that afternoon to the school, hide it under my desk, and as soon as the bell rang for the end of the last class, I would walk to the railroad station and get on a train for Madison. I would get there about dinnertime and stayed until Sunday night.

I thought that I could do a lot of reading in Milton in preparation for examinations. But I found that teaching high school, especially the first year, took one heck of a lot of time --preparing for classes, grading papers, reading little essays that they wrote. I did manage to get through a course of reading in American history, but I got nowhere near what I had expected.

That year was enough to persuade me that high school teaching was not for me. I remember my principal, who visited my class a number of times, said, "Well, you're very good at teaching, but you really ought to develop more interest in your students. Get to know them out of the class," and so on. I was much too busy to do that.

Lage: Right. It didn't appeal to you, these young minds?

Stamp: I was awfully young myself--I was twenty-two--and I had a little trouble with girls in my classes getting crushes on me, wanting me to go walking with them.

Lage: [laughs] That's probably not what the principal had in mind.

Stamp: These seniors--there was about four years difference between their age and my age at that time. I certainly didn't ever want to live in a small town like that. But it was a good experience.

I must tell you one thing. This town was dominated by Seventh-Day Baptists, which meant no smoking. I smoked; they knew I smoked, but certainly women were not to smoke. My room in my rooming house became a den of iniquity. The kindergarten teacher didn't actually room in the house, but she came for meals there. The English teacher at the high school had a room in this house, and they both smoked. They would come into my room after dinner and smoke.

Lage: These were women?

Stampp: Yes. It was odd, incidentally, that they didn't disapprove of my having these women in my room. I guess the atmosphere was so pure that they couldn't really believe anything unethical would be going on.

The son of the owner of this rooming house--they were Seventh-Day Baptists--used to hide his pint of whiskey in my closet. [laughter]

Lage: You were the radical from the big city.

Stampp: Yes. Once in a while, we would get snowed in and the school would be closed for a day. I couldn't get out either, so the English teacher and I used to sit on the floor in my room and play poker. [laughter] It was a funny year.

I learned in the spring that I had been given a teaching assistantship at Wisconsin for the fall of 1936, so I told them I wouldn't be back. I had \$300 in the bank, and I needed a job that summer. My sister had a job as a secretary in a company in Milwaukee called the Pulp Reproduction Company, I'll explain what that is. I applied for a job there, a real working-class job, and got it. The pay was twenty-five cents an hour, and I was on the night shift, four-thirty until midnight, six days a week.

The Pulp Reproduction Company was a company that made toys, Halloween jack-o-lanterns and Easter bunnies and Christmas Santa Claus out of a sort of papier-mâché. The floor above had stacks of these, and there was a big hamper, and they would come down. Then there was an assembly line, and in front of me I had a tub of sizing. There was a guy next to me, and for seven and a half hours, we would take these papier-mâché things, dip them in the tub of sizing, put them on the conveyor belt which brought them through an oven, where they were dried out. You would wind up with this sizing all over your face and all over your clothes, and at midnight you would change your clothes. I had a long three-quarters-of-an-hour streetcar ride home. I did it all summer long, and almost broke my back doing it.

Lage: So this gave you the first-hand insight into labor economics.

Stampp: That's right. This was on the south side of Milwaukee, which was a Polish district, and there were lots of Poles and other Slavic people living there. Most of the people working with me were from this background. I was amazed at how indifferent they were to politics and how indifferent they were to radical politics. No one was interested, they were just interested in getting along day to day.

Lage: Probably too tired.

Stampp: Well, that's right. They knew that I had taught high school for a year, so I was a kind of curious guy. The job did give me some time to read. It was about a forty-five-minute streetcar ride--I was living with my parents on the north side of Milwaukee--to the south side place, and I always had a book with me. I would read on the streetcar all the way there and all the way back, and I got quite a lot of reading done. I remember very well that was the summer I read *Gone With The Wind*.

Lage: How did you react to *Gone With The Wind* with your background in Southern history?

Stampp: I thought it was pretty awful, but I read it. I also remember reading several books on Reconstruction on the streetcar.

At the end of that summer, I took a bus down to Chattanooga to see my girlfriend and spent about ten days with her there. She was about to go off to Washington; that's why I went down to see her. We talked about the next year, and we agreed that a year is a long time, and we're not going to just lead an isolated life. So we both agreed that we were going to date and we did.

Teaching Assistant to William Hesseltime

Stampp: I went back to Madison and was a teaching assistant, Hesseltime's teaching assistant. I had a fellow teaching assistant. There were 300 students in the class, and Hesseltime's idea of the role of the teaching assistant was to do everything except give the lectures.

Lage: All the correcting?

Stampp: We not only corrected the exams, but we made them out and assigned the final grades. Hesseltime lectured twice a week. This was the survey course in American history. We broke up these 300 students into discussion sections. I had to teach about five discussion sections, and my partner, George Smith, taught the others. There were two midterm exams plus the final.

Lage: Which you designed and corrected?

Stampp: We designed them, yes, and the midterm exams were a combination of multiple choice questions and one essay question. Working out a set of multiple choice questions takes a heck of a lot of time.

We did it, and then that horrible time came when we had to grade these exams.

Lage: This was a real job.

Stampp: It was a real job, yes.

Lage: He didn't give you guidance?

Stampp: No. I think he visited my discussion sections a couple of times, sat and listened, which was totally disruptive, when you have twenty students and the professor sitting in the back seat. The whole thing becomes artificial. They were trying to help me as much as possible, and I was nervous, but we got through it.

Lage: All of these experiences must have had their impact when you became a professor, I would think. We can get to that.

Stampp: Yes. I'm trying to think of what else happened that year, outside of my knowing that my love life was falling apart, and that didn't help. By the spring, I knew that she had met another man, and things were not going well.

Lage: Were you doing okay with Hesseltine at that point?

Stampp: I was doing okay with Hesseltine. I finished my M.A. work at the end of the fall of the 1936 term.

Lage: Did you get any Beardian interpretation into that M.A. thesis?

Stampp: Oh, yes, sure. It was Beardian, what it was that motivated people to join the antislavery movement, and others who opposed the antislavery movement.

I got my M.A., then, at the end of the fall of 1936 and began my Ph.D. work immediately in the spring of 1937. Outside of that, it was an uneventful year. I worked very hard as a T.A., reading in different fields, and auditing courses.

There was one course, the only lecture course I remember that I really thought was wonderful. It was a course in English constitutional history taught by a Medievalist whose real interest was in the history of Genoa in the Middle Ages. He was a magnificent lecturer. It was a very small class, about forty students. He had a kind of enthusiasm for English constitutional history, starting way back with the Anglo-Saxons, the early beginnings of a parliamentary system, and the beginnings of the kind of local government that England had. I found that course just absolutely fascinating. He was a wonderful teacher. Why he

was so enthusiastic about it, I don't know, but he had this terrible enthusiasm that he conveyed to his students, and we all thought it was a great course.

His name was Robert Reynolds, and his research was in medieval Genoa, economic history of medieval Genoa.

Lage: Did he have an economic interpretation--Beardian?

Stampp: Not particularly, no. It was really very strict, technical, constitutional history about the development of political institutions and constitutional traditions in Britain, and the Witan, which was sort of the forerunner of the English parliament and how it functioned, how local records were kept right on through the Middle Ages, on through the Tudor and Stuart periods to the modern period. I was only auditing the course, but it was the one I remember being most exciting.

At Christmas time, Mary--ultimately her name became Mary Dearing. Mary Rulkotter was her maiden name. She came to Wisconsin at Christmas, and we spent a week or ten days together. She was staying at my family house. Our relationship was pretty good. It got back on track again, but it was off the track pretty soon after she got back to Washington.

In June 1937, I was back briefly in Milwaukee, and Mary came to Milwaukee from Washington. Obviously, everyone knew it was hopeless--everyone but me.

Lage: This sounds maybe more painful than you're even expressing.

Stampp: It was extremely painful. It really was one of the most hurting things, and it had an impact on my first wife--I'll tell you later. One of the problems was that Mary could never really say, "Look, Ken, it's over." There was always this, "Well, I'm not sure, I'm not sure."

We went back to Madison in the summer of 1937, and she rented a room in a sorority house. I lived nearby, so we had a lot of time together that summer while I was still a T.A. and preparing for the written exams.

Richard Nelson Current

Stampp: In the fall of 1937, I was Hesselstine's teaching assistant again, and that fall I met somebody who became a close academic friend

for the rest of my life. His name is Richard Nelson Current, and he became a very distinguished historian. He was born in Colorado Springs and went to Oberlin as an undergraduate, majoring in English and the classics. From Oberlin, he went for his master's degree to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts College in Boston, and got his M.A. really in diplomatic history. Then he came to Madison because he wanted to work with Hesselstine.

He arrived actually in 1936, but I didn't really get to know him that year, but in '37, he became Hesselstine's teaching assistant. The other T.A. of the year before had finished and left to do research.

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Stampp: I don't think that Hesselstine was an ideal seminar teacher. He was rude in some ways. Somebody would be giving a report, and he'd get up and start walking around, or looking at a book, or whatever.

Lage: Giving you a subtle message.

Stampp: And then, suddenly, an idea would pop into his head, and he'd expound some theory of his about why a certain historical figure behaved as he did, and what his motives were, and so on. I remember my friend Richard Current was in the seminar with me, the second term I was in his seminar. He had just come to Wisconsin from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He was going to do a biography of Thaddeus Stevens, the radical Republican of the Civil War and Reconstruction period. And he was giving a seminar report on Stevens's early life and his interest in railroad building in Pennsylvania, and in coal and mines and iron manufacturing. Hesselstine suddenly interrupted him and began expounding some theory about Thaddeus Stevens.

I can remember Dick Current sitting there with a kind of smirk on his face, and to the amazement of everyone in the seminar, when Hesselstine finished, Dick Current said, "Well, that's about the most naive explanation of Stevens I've ever heard." No one had ever done that. [laughter] Hesselstine was sort of taken aback, too.

Lage: That took some courage, I would think, from the way you've described Hesselstine.

Stampp: It was either folly or courage. Hesselstine accepted it, because Dick Current became his teaching assistant the next year.

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Lage: So you and he were a team.

Stamp: He and I were teaching assistants during the 1937-1938 year. Dick and I became very close friends almost immediately. Ideologically, we were much alike. We had the same radical views, and we both enjoyed relaxing weekends and going out and drinking beer, so it was a wonderful friendship that developed.

Lage: Sharing of intellectual ideas?

Stamp: Yes, sharing of intellectual ideas. We have some differences about American foreign policy now, but intellectually, we are still--we're certainly no longer Marxists, but we're still very liberal. I would say we are sort of left-wing Democrats. We communicate all the time. Now he has a fax machine, and I have a fax machine, so we're faxing each other.

Lage: Where is he now?

Stamp: He's retired. He's almost exactly my age. He lives in South Natick, Massachusetts, which is a suburb of Boston. He taught in lots of different places later on. His first job was on the eastern shore of Maryland at one of the Maryland state teachers colleges, and then he went from there to a small college in upstate New York, I can't remember the name of it. He also taught for a year or so in a state teachers college in the upper peninsula of Michigan.

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Stamp: He taught at Lawrence College in Appleton, Wisconsin, for a couple of years. Then he got a job at Mills College, so that was wonderful. I was in Berkeley, and he was there for about four years, from about 1948 to '52. He left Mills and went to the University of Illinois, and from there he went to the University of North Carolina Women's College at Greensborough. From there he went to the University of Wisconsin, which he didn't like very much. He didn't like teaching graduate students; they took too much time.

He went back to Greensborough and continued there. Then it became the University of North Carolina, co-ed in his last years, and he finished there and retired. His first wife died of cancer, and he's remarried. Now they live in Massachusetts.

He's one of the most prolific writers I've ever known. He must have written fifteen or sixteen books by now. His doctoral dissertation was a biography of Thaddeus Stevens, the radical Republican in the Civil War and Reconstruction period, called *Old*

Thad Stevens, very much a Beardian interpretation of Thad Stevens and his railroad interests and his iron interests in Pennsylvania.

While he was teaching up at Northern Michigan State College, he found a trunk full of letters written by the inventor of the typewriter, so he wrote a book about the invention and development of the typewriter which was quite good. He has written all over the lot.

Lage: He enjoys writing, it sounds like.

Stampp: He loves writing. He finishes one book, and he starts right off on another book. He's written biographies, he's written a number of books on Southern history, he's written about the carpetbaggers in the South. Incidentally, he's also written a history of Phi Beta Kappa. He was commissioned to write it for Phi Beta Kappa.

He just finished a book, and it's going to be published, a biography of a famous dancer called Louie Fuller. I don't know whether you know her. She apparently was a sensational dancer around the turn of the century. His second wife is very much interested in Louie Fuller and began collecting memorabilia about her, posters and so on, so he decided to write a biography of her. She spent much of her time in Paris, and he had to go to Paris to go through letters there. I'm looking forward to reading it. I just got a note from him yesterday saying he's finished the Fuller biography, and he's got to get on to something else.

Lage: Now, how did he help you with your writing? Was it during this year when you were teaching assistants?

Stampp: No, it came later. After we were out of graduate school--he was usually somewhere other than where I was--I always sent him my manuscripts to read. He was a wonderful literary critic. I really did learn a great deal from him about writing clear sentences.

Lage: Something you would hope for from a professor.

Stampp: I'm sure it came out of his background, the major he had in English and the classics at Oberlin. There's nothing spectacular about his prose, it's just clear as crystal. You know what he means. So it's been a marvelous relationship all these years.

Lage: That's a very satisfying kind of friendship.

Ph.D. Qualifying Exams

Stamp: Now I'm getting toward the Ph.D. exams. That year, the second semester--that would have been the spring of 1938--Dick's and my idea was that we would try to take those written exams in May. We went to Hesseltine in February and said, "We're taking our qualifying, our writtens, this May. Could we drop out of your seminar this time?" Our understanding was that he said okay.

So we were devoting all our time, apart from our teaching, getting ready for the written exams. Some time in early April, we were in--we had keys to Hesseltine's office, and that's where we studied and where we graded exams--we were in his office, and he came in. He suddenly turned on the two of us and said, "Who the hell do you think you are? My seminar--you're too good for my seminar," and on and on, a real tirade. We were both astounded.

Lage: Here you had been working with him as teaching assistants all semester.

Stamp: We had been in his seminar X number of times, and we were working with him as his teaching assistants. He was furious, obviously, that we weren't in his seminar.

Dick was really a little bit ahead of me. He went on and took his exams that spring and got a job on the eastern shore of Maryland. In my case, I needed for the next year a traveling fellowship. I haven't told you about my dissertation, but it meant I would have to leave Madison. I had applied for a traveling fellowship which paid \$600, which you had to get by on for ten months. Hesseltine didn't raise a finger to get anything for me from the department.

I found out later that Curtis Nettels, this colonial historian, after they dished out all kinds of fellowships, had said, "Well, what about Stamp?" Hesseltine hadn't said a word about me. I got the pickings at the end; it was a fellowship that paid only \$400 a year. I was furious then, and I was ready to quit the whole thing. I thought, "Well, my major professor has turned against me, and you can't get a job if your major professor isn't behind you."

I couldn't live on forty dollars a month, so I went to Milwaukee, and I told my parents and my aunt, "I'm quitting." I began looking for a job, and I almost found one.

Well, my aunt Selma, whose picture hangs in my study there and always will--I'll have to show it to you--my aunt Selma literally got on her knees and begged me to go on.

Lage: Oh, my goodness! [they go to look at picture and keep talking]

Stamp: There she is, she's my maiden aunt.

Lage: You wouldn't have made it without her.

Stamp: No.

Lage: Oh, she's wonderful, strong.

Stamp: Yes. She was a wonderful woman. She said, "How much more do you need?" I said, "I think I'm going to need about seventeen dollars a month more." She said, "Well, I'll give it to you, but go on back to school." So I did.

Lage: This is all happening at once!

Stamp: All happening at once, that's right--my love life falling apart, my professor turning against me. I spent that whole summer of 1938 studying for my Ph.D. exams. The closer I got to those exams, the more I began to dread them. You know, it was a test of your physical endurance much more than your intellect.

Lage: Yes, I can see. In two weeks.

Stamp: That's right. I began having indigestion. I would wake up at three in the morning or I couldn't get to sleep, I would be making up questions and how would I answer them, having sodium bicarbonate at three in the morning, then going back to sleep or trying to get to sleep. Actually, I was living in Madison that summer. I thought it was better to get away from home and the distractions there.

So October came, and I took the exams. I remember--it was the honor system. I would get the exam, and I would go to my room. I can't remember which exam was the first one, but I remember taking the exam, looking at the questions, and my mind was a total blank. I thought, I'm not going to pass them. I'm just not going to pass them.

Incidentally, I had resolved that if I didn't pass, I would never do it again. I would never go through the physical ordeal, so it was this time or never.

I must have sat for a half hour, just absolutely blank. I remember finally picking up a pen and starting to write, and then writing and writing and writing. Somebody would bring me some luncheon, and I just kept writing.

Lage: Something did happen when you picked up your pen.

Stamp: Well, something happened. I began writing, and things began coming back. I turned in that exam at five in the afternoon, and a couple of days later, I had the second one. The second one wasn't as bad. I didn't have this blank feeling about it at the beginning.

Lage: Were the questions all essay?

Stamp: They were all essay questions.

Lage: Were they challenging?

Stamp: They were challenging enough; they were good, broad questions.

Lage: Pretty much to get the comprehensive nature of your knowledge?

Stamp: Yes. I can't remember what the questions were any more.

I finally got to my European history exam, and that I knew was going to be a real problem. The head man in European history who was going to read my paper was named Chester Penn Higby. I had taken a survey course with him way back when I first went to Madison, but in graduate school I could never do any work with him because his classes met when I was a teaching assistant to Hesseltine. So one day, I went in to see him, and I said, "Professor Higby, I'm terribly sorry," I knew he was awfully sensitive about this.

Lage: [laughs] Another one you've offended.

Stamp: I said, "I've wanted to take courses with you, but I am a teaching assistant for Professor Hesseltine, and his class meets when your class meets, and I couldn't make it. Professor Higby, I want you to know I spent all summer reading European history." Professor Higby said, "Mr. Stamp, some people read European history for twenty years and don't feel that they know it yet." [laughter] That really was a help.

So when my European history exam came along, I knew I was in trouble. He was a notorious examiner for asking--I can remember several of the questions: "Write a history of the eastern shore of

the Adriatic," "Write a history of the lower Vistula Valley,"
 "Write a history of religious controversy in Bohemia."

Lage: This is the kind of thing you can't fake. It's too specific.

Stamp: That's right, yes. The graduate students said, "This guy goes to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and picks out these questions to put on our exams." [laughter] Not to my surprise, I passed my other exams very well, but he passed me with a warning of weakness, and that meant he was going to be on my final oral exam, and he was going to really zero in on me.

Lage: So the oral exam also covered all of these areas?

Stamp: That's right, except I got a quittance in my colonial history, so I was not examined in colonial history. For English history, European history, and my major field, I was questioned.

I finished those exams. I really should have had a month off, gone and rested somewhere, because I was absolutely exhausted. I saw my major professor (Hesseltine), and I said, "I'm leaving," because I was going to go off and do research immediately. I was going to Milwaukee to rest for two days, and I said to him, "Look, when the exams are over"--in those days, you sent telegrams--"will you send me a telegram telling me whether I passed or not? Incidentally, if I didn't pass, don't bother."

Lage: [laughs] Oh, no! Had you patched up your relationship with him at all?

Stamp: Well, sort of. I wouldn't say I was on the best of terms with him; I still hadn't forgiven him for what he did. He didn't send the telegram, so I knew I had failed. In due course, a letter came from the secretary of the History Department saying, "Dear Mr. Stamp, I am glad to tell you, you passed your exams." He was a bastard.

Then I started my dissertation. That really takes us through graduate school except for the final oral exam.

Lage: It's surely a mix of good memories and bad.

Stamp: Mostly good, as I look back now. I do really feel nostalgic. I loved graduate school, but my relations with Hesseltine ultimately led to a total break. The last few years of his life, I had nothing to do with him, and he had nothing to do with me.

Dissertation: Indiana Politics during the Civil War

[Interview 3: April 30, 1996] ##

Lage: Today is April 30, 1996, and this is the third session with Kenneth Stamp. Last time, we were launching you into the research for your dissertation.

Stamp: Did I say anything about my dissertation, why I picked what I picked?

Lage: Not in detail. I would like to hear that.

Stamp: Well, I think that's probably where to begin.

I was definitely going to work in Hesseltine's field some time. I've already talked about my master's thesis on antislavery?

Lage: Yes.

Stamp: Okay. I intended to keep working in that period and that field. Somehow, I got interested in an Indiana politician. I have no Indiana connections. Indiana is politically an interesting state, and I'll explain why. I got interested in an Indiana politician named Oliver P. Morton. He was a Democrat in his early life, and broke with the Democrats in 1854 over the Kansas-Nebraska bill. He joined a group that was at that time known as the Anti-Nebraska Democrats. They were one part of the coalition that formed the Republican party, old Whigs and Anti-Nebraska Democrats and antislavery Free-Soilers, some former members of the Know-Nothing party.

Morton was a fairly important, active politician during the 1850s, and in 1860, he ran for lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket and was elected. Another Republican, [Henry S.] Lane, was elected governor. Everyone knew in advance that he was going to be elected to the United States Senate. He was, and Morton became governor in 1861.

My interest in Morton never changed, but I finally decided that I disliked the man so much that I couldn't possibly write a biography of him. That's an interesting matter.

Lage: Did the dislike grow as your research went along?

Stamp: The more I got to know him, the more I got to dislike the man, and that's an interesting thing to think about. Biographers usually

write about people they like and not often about people they don't like. Perhaps there would be some interesting biographies if they were written by people who didn't like their subjects, like some of the Nixon biographies, for example.

By that time, I had done quite a lot of research on Morton as governor, as Civil War governor of Indiana.

Lage: Was this in preparation for the dissertation?

Stamp: Yes. Some of it--I had to be doing some, because I was in that seminar a couple of times, and I had to do seminar reports every semester. So I was doing whatever research I could do at the Wisconsin Historical Society, and there's quite a lot of material there.

Lage: Would Hesseltine have pointed you in this direction, or is this just something you came across?

Stamp: The Morton?

Lage: The Morton.

Stamp: No, this was strictly my idea, except that I knew I was going to work in that period because the period interested me so much.

Then the question was, if I don't want to do a biography of Morton, how do I salvage off-and-on research over a couple of years? I finally decided that I was going to do a more general study of Indiana politics during the Civil War. This turned out to be a fascinating subject because Indiana was a fascinating state during the Civil War.

Southern Indiana was populated by people from the South, coming out of Virginia and Kentucky and Tennessee. Northern Indiana was populated by people coming from upstate New York and New England, and attitudes and politics were quite different. The Republican party was strongest in northern Indiana. It had some pockets of support in the south. The Democratic party was strongest in southern Indiana, with some pockets of support in the north.

Although Republicans won the election of 1860, Indiana had always been a kind of a swing state. It would switch back and forth between Whigs and Democrats. There was a very substantial group in Indiana, largely in southern Indiana--not totally but largely--who had strongly favored compromise with the South. Some of them had even felt, as a few Republicans did, if the South wants to go, let them go.

Lage: Was this because of their Southern sympathies, or some other reason?

Stamp: It was because of their Southern sympathies. They were not particularly antislavery, and beyond that, there were other fears that Democrats expressed even before the war broke out: that the war would destroy American democracy, that it would lead to a dictatorship, that it was a bad idea to try to hold a union together with bayonets--and a union held together with bayonets isn't really worth having. A few Republicans said that too; Horace Greeley, for a while, said "Let the erring sisters depart in peace."

Lage: Would this have been something that had a resonance with the antiwar feeling of your time? Or didn't you see it?

Stamp: Possibly. I never thought of it in those terms. I was interested in the peace Democrats, who they were and why they were peace Democrats, and also in the battle within the Republican party in Indiana between radicals and conservatives, radicals in terms of antislavery sentiments and conservatives much less so. So my decision then was to do a study, mostly political, about the cultural and social conditions in Indiana during the war, and it did indeed turn out to be a very interesting subject.

The peace Democrats organized a secret society called the--first it was called the Order of American Knights, and then it was called the Sons of Liberty, and of course the Republicans almost immediately began calling them traitors. This was a secret, pro-Southern organization.

Among these peace Democrats, there was a tiny fragment that really was so pro-Southern that they were ready to give support to the South. There was a famous conspiracy trial in Indiana in 1864 involving someone named Lambdin P. Milligan, who was convicted of treason on rather flimsy grounds. At first he was sentenced to be executed, then later on President Johnson commuted his sentence to life imprisonment. After the war, his case got into the federal courts and went up to the United States Supreme Court on the grounds that his civil liberties had been violated because he had been tried by a military court at a time when the regular federal courts were open.

The Supreme Court, in the case of Ex parte Milligan, a year after the war was over in 1866, ruled that Milligan had been illegally tried in a military court at a time when the regular courts were open. The trial had been a purely political gesture on the eve of the election of 1864, when Morton was running for

reelection and Lincoln was running for reelection. So all of that made it extremely interesting.

I studied the peace Democrats very carefully. In 1862, incidentally, the Democrats regained control of the Indiana legislature, so there was a battle royal between the Democratic legislature and the Republican governor. The legislature adopted a number of resolutions--not calling for peace but denouncing the Republicans, denouncing Lincoln as a dictator. Legislators said that this war was being fought for the benefit of Eastern bankers and manufacturers at the expense of Western farmers.

That is what interested me about the peace Democrats--what they were saying about railroad interests and banking interests and manufacturing interests, and how they were behind the Republican party, and how Republicans were indifferent to the interests of Western farmers. This, I think, is where my political background in the thirties comes in, because it seemed to me, and this is really the interpretation I put in my dissertation, that the peace Democrats were not really pro-Southern. What they kept calling for was an armistice and further negotiation.

The peace Democrats themselves were broken up into factions. One group was ready for peace at any price; another group called for an armistice and negotiation with the South--they were a little vague about what would happen if the negotiation broke down, but they never said, "Then we'll just let them go." They were ambiguous about that.

What interested me was the rhetoric, the economic rhetoric, about railroads and railroad practices and about bankers. Much of it sounded to me like the rhetoric of the Grangers after the war in the Midwest, and of the Populists at the end of the nineteenth century in the South and in the West.

That is the fundamental interpretation of my book--that as far as the Democrats were concerned, there was only a tiny fragment, a tiny group, that was actually ready to support the Confederacy. In that group was one of the Indiana senators, Jesse Bright, who actually was a slaveholder and had a plantation in Kentucky. He had apparently had some correspondence with Jefferson Davis during the secession crisis suggesting sources of military equipment for the South. In 1862, he was expelled from the Senate for his disloyal activities. He was never arrested for treason; the Senate just expelled him.

So that was my interpretation as far as the Democrats were concerned. They weren't traitors. They were alarmed about

certain social and economic changes that were taking place. They were suspicious of the Republicans as tools of these Eastern interests, and that was about it.

Maybe this is jumping ahead--but I have to tell you--I saved all the notes for my dissertation. I found it very hard to throw notes away. For a couple of reasons, I went back over those notes that I took in the 1930s, with the New Deal and the economic crisis and the Depression--all of that as part of the background of my time.

Lage: Looking at it as an historian looking at yourself?

Stampp: Looking at myself but looking at my notes, and I found something new in them. I had taken notes, dutifully taken notes on it, but I didn't give it much emphasis. What I found, and what I obviously would have put much more emphasis on if I had been writing in the 1960s, was that these peace Democrats, these so-called Copperheads, were also terrible racists.

Lage: That didn't strike you initially?

Stampp: Well, I have one paragraph in the book where I make some remark about racism among the Democrats, but that just didn't resonate with me in the atmosphere of the 1930s, as it obviously would have in the 1960s. There again is something that historians might ponder: how important the times are in which you write.

Lage: So someone else coming to that in the sixties, or your own self coming to it in the sixties, would have seen the sources differently?

Stampp: Right. Well, I once gave a lecture which was published as an article called "Interpreting History." I used that as an example of the way in which the times in which a historian lives has some effect on what interests him, what kind of subjects he picks, and how he interprets them. I would have put a very heavy emphasis on the racial demagoguery of the Copperheads--not that Republicans were free of racial prejudice, but they never resorted to the kind of racial demagoguery that Democrats did.

Lage: To stir up people.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: Was that part of the Populists, also?

Stampp: I don't think so. I never understood Populism as a racist movement. There was racism among some Populists clearly enough,

but in this case, racism was very important among these peace Democrats. All you have to do is read their propaganda, their speeches, their papers, talking about the terrible consequences of emancipation. There would be a black tide sweeping up into the North taking jobs away from white workers. There were all kinds of cartoons and caricatures of blacks. There were claims that the Republicans were in favor of racial equality, interracial marriages, and so on.

As a matter of fact, a pamphlet was published by a Democrat in 1864, during the political campaign of 1864, professing to be a Republican and advocating miscegenation. In fact, he invented that term.

Lage: The word miscegenation?

Stampp: Miscegenation goes back to the campaign of 1864, as far as I know. I can't remember it ever being used before that--tongue-in-cheek, saying, "This would be a good thing, it would be a good thing to mix the races." That's the Democratic side of my story.

Now, the other side of the story that interested me was the battle between conservative Republicans and radical Republicans. There were two principal figures in Indiana. One was the governor himself, Oliver P. Morton, who was a conservative Republican on slavery matters. The principal radical Republican in Indiana, the most interesting one--and I thought at one time maybe I should have written a biography of him--George W. Julian, a congressman from a district in east central Indiana. Richmond is, I believe, the county seat of the county that he lived in. I can't remember the name of it.

George W. Julian--there were a lot of Quakers in his district, incidentally--was an antislavery radical before the Civil War, before the Republican party was born. He was a Free-Soiler, then joined the Republicans as a Free-Soiler, and always did what he could to make the Republican party an antislavery party. He was disappointed in Lincoln's nomination because he didn't think Lincoln was radical enough. He would have liked to have had Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, who was a political abolitionist, nominated instead.

As soon as the war broke out, Julian and others like him wanted it to become an antislavery crusade. They argued that just fighting and never getting rid of the root of the war, which was slavery, would be ridiculous. To let the war end with slavery still in existence would make the war almost worthless. He didn't like Morton, and Morton didn't like him. Every two years when

Julian would run for reelection, Morton would plot to get him out of Congress.

That district, incidentally, had primary elections long before they were well known. There would be a Republican primary, and Morton would have a candidate and try to get him nominated.

Lage: So there were really two distinct branches.

Stampp: That's right. I found that a fascinating part of the whole story.

Lage: Did you like Julian better than Morton?

Stampp: Oh, I liked Julian very much. He was my hero. The book makes it quite obvious that Julian is my man, rather than Morton, yes.

Morton was reelected in 1864 as governor. In 1866, he was elected by a Republican legislature to the United States Senate, and he was in the Senate for the next ten years, to 1876--actually, until 1877. He died in 1877. By 1866 he had turned against Andrew Johnson and became a radical Republican, just totally switched--favored black suffrage, favored the radical program of Reconstruction in the South, was a staunch supporter of the Grant administration, and hoped to be the Republican candidate for president in '76. It didn't work.

He continued to be a potent and powerful man, but his dislike for Julian never ended, and Julian finally lost out in 1870, as I recall. Morton, even though they were both radicals now, got rid of Julian. So that's basically the story.

Lage: Do you carry it forth into the Reconstruction era?

Stampp: No, I ended with the end of the war in my dissertation. I have an introductory chapter on the 1850s about the formation of the Republican party and the election of 1860; the second chapter is on the secession crisis; then the rest is on the war and the social consequences. I have a concluding chapter that tries to summarize my view of what had happened in society in Indiana during the war and to the politics of Indiana. That's where I ended it.

After I wrote the dissertation, I reworked it, did some cutting, and submitted it for publication.

Lage: That was when you came to Berkeley?

Stampp: No, that was when I was at the University of Maryland, and maybe I had better wait for that. Ultimately, it was published. I was thinking of that all along, that someone would publish it.

A Year in Indiana

Stampp: To go on with the research for that book, I had to spend a year in Indiana. I had my research fellowship, \$400, and I think it was seventeen dollars a month that I got from my aunt Selma.

Lage: It's just such an unbelievable small amount. Those were different times, after all.

Stampp: Yes. What I really should have done after I had taken my exams--I really needed to take a month off and just rest. I was exhausted. I had lost a lot of sleep, and my stomach was giving me trouble, just from all the tension. As soon as I heard that I had passed the exams, I took a bus to Indianapolis. My first problem was getting settled.

I didn't know anyone in Indianapolis. I wandered around downtown Indianapolis and a little ways out, and I found a hotel with the inappropriate name Puritan Hotel. I found that I could rent a room in that hotel for something like two and a half dollars a week, or maybe three dollars a week--very little. It wasn't the most lovely hotel I've ever seen by any means, but it seemed adequate. It was easy walking distance to the Indiana State Library; that was important. The room was very plain, quite sparse, in fact, and didn't have a desk in it. I said I needed a desk, so they found a desk and brought it up for me. I settled in, I thought, possibly for the year.

Well, it turned out that in the room next to me lived a prostitute, [laughter] and that was okay, except that things got kind of noisy in her room sometimes.

Lage: Quite a ways from your upbringing!

Stampp: Yes, so I thought this simply won't do. Somebody suggested that I try the YMCA hotel. I think I lasted at the Puritan Hotel for about three weeks, and then told them I was going to leave.

I found the YMCA, and they had a room. The cost was a little more but not much more. It was even closer to the library; that was fine. One of the problems--I seemed to have run into problems--a man in the room next to mine was a World War I veteran

who had either been shell shocked or affected by gas, mustard gas. In any case, he was subject to fits. He would have them sometimes in the middle of the night. The walls apparently were rather thin, and I could hear this man moaning and groaning next door. I was still losing sleep. Sometimes he would have his fit somewhere in the corridor, and he would be lying in the corridor, and I would have to go and get somebody.

Lage: Oh, dear. [laughter]

Stamp: So still more bad luck. I went down in October, and I lasted there until the end of November.

Somehow, I met a young man who had gone to the University of Pittsburgh. He was my age, and he belonged to the same fraternity I had belonged to. In fact, I think somebody from the fraternity wrote and told me that there was another Theta Xi. He was staying at the YMCA hotel at that time. He worked for the Indianapolis Power and Light Company, he had a decent job. We got to know each other, and we finally decided that we would see if we couldn't find an apartment.

We went hunting, and we found an apartment that we could rent, I think, for forty dollars a month, so it cost each of us twenty dollars a month for the apartment. We moved in December, and we lived together until the following July when I went home. This was very nice. He was a very friendly guy. Our interests were very different, but we had weekend fun.

He had a girlfriend at that time--and so did I, come to think of it. She was teaching up in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. I told you about meeting Kay, didn't I--Katherine?

Lage: No, you have not. Is this your first wife?

Stamp: It's my first wife, yes. Shall I go back to where I met her?

Lage: Yes, since you are talking about personal life here, let's go back.

Stamp: All right. I was waiting table in a fraternity house in the summer of 1938, and there was a young woman just about my age who taught high school. She was a Wisconsin graduate, and she taught speech and dramatics in a high school outside of Madison in a little town called Edgerton. The day after Mary left, I had a date with this woman. Her name was Katherine Mitchell. She lived about forty miles out of Madison, in Dodgeville. We started going out immediately. I can see it all looking back--I mean, this was a man on the rebound.

Lage: Yes, that's a classic case, it sounds like.

Stampp: Absolutely. My college roommate I had mentioned before, Bob Baldwin, kept warning me and warning me, "Just be careful. You don't know what you're doing." Well, we went out all summer, and in September I asked her to marry me.

Lage: This was before you went away to do your research?

Stampp: This was the September before I took my Ph.D. exams. I took them the following month. I asked her to marry me in September 1938, and I took my exams the following month. It's evidence of the fact that I didn't know what the heck I was doing. She said she would marry me, and she shouldn't have. She should have realized that I was not--I did not conceal my relationship with Mary. She said she would marry me, but we didn't get married until December of 1939, so from September 1938 to December 1939, I had time to change my mind, but I didn't.

So I did have a girlfriend, a fiancée, when I went down to Indianapolis, and so did my roommate.

Lage: Was she nearby, or how far away was she?

Stampp: She was teaching the year I was in Indianapolis. She was teaching speech and dramatics in Edgerton. She had been teaching for some years. Her home was in Dodgeville, which is about forty-four miles west of Madison.

Lage: Was her background similar to yours at all--family and religion?

Stampp: Well, no, not really. Coincidentally, I grew up in a Methodist church, and so did she, but I had no religion at this time. I can't remember that she had very much either.

So we corresponded. I went home in December, and I saw her at Christmas time. In the spring during her spring break, she came down to Indianapolis and spent a week down there, living at the YWCA.

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Stampp: My life that year was very simple: work. I worked in the Indiana State Library and the Indiana Historical Bureau. They were both in the same building, but they had different collections. In the evening at least five nights a week, I went to the Indiana Public Library and worked on newspapers for the 1850s and 1860s, and that's about all there was to my life. I knew my roommate, I got to know the people at the Indiana State Library, but I had

virtually no social life while I was down there. It was just work. Sometimes my roommate and I played two-handed bridge at night just for diversion. I read when I could, but it was really just the library all day long.

Lage: Was it an unhappy time, or were you enjoying the work?

Stamp: I think I was kind of lonesome down there with not knowing anybody. I had had a rather active social life in Madison, and this was drudgery in some respects, but the research was exciting, I loved it.

Lage: You found what you were looking for.

Stamp: Well, that's not the way to put it. [laughter] It may be, but that would have been unconscious. I found lots of interesting things. I was looking for interesting things, obviously.

By the end of that year, by July, I had almost, but not quite, finished the work I needed to do in Indiana. I went back to Madison in the summer of 1939. Then I had to try to get some sort of teaching so that I could earn some money because I was going to get married in December.

I went to the History Department, and they decided they would give me a teaching assistantship for the third time. That's very unusual, but these were still Depression years. This time my mentor, Hesseltine, did help. I got a teaching assistantship, and I assisted him for a third time.

In addition to that, I went over to the University Extension division, and they had one course that needed to be taught. It was English history, and it was in Fond du Lac. Have you ever heard of Fond du Lac?

Lage: No.

Stamp: All right. Fond du Lac--in Wisconsin it's simply called "Fondjalac," [spells Fond du Lac]--foot of the lake, I guess. That would pay me seventy-two dollars a month. The teaching assistantship would pay me, I think it was fifty dollars a month, so I had \$122 a month. That was pretty good money. I bought a secondhand Ford for forty dollars--wait a minute, no, it was seventy dollars.

Lage: This is good memory for detail, remembering things like this.

Stamp: I have a good memory for some things. Anyway, I bought the Ford which had to have a lot of things done to it. It was an open Ford

with these sort of vinyl curtains on the side, you know? It was pretty awful. I had to drive up to Fond du Lac twice a week. As I remember it, I taught the course at about five o'clock in the afternoon and then drove back. Fond du Lac to Madison was about sixty miles, something like that, so I had to do this twice a week.

Lage: Who were your students?

Stamp: The University of Wisconsin had an extension division, and courses were usually taught by people just out of graduate school. They had extension classes all over the state, and as I'll tell you later, my next year was full-time in the extension. This year I taught that one course, English history, at Fond du Lac. The students were--some were teachers who were trying to get M.A. degrees to get pay raises, some were young students who were economizing by living at home and going to university classes in their towns--usually for a year or at the most two years, then they would come down to Madison to finish. They were not bad students; they were pretty good. So that's how I made my living.

This is where Frank Freidel comes in.

Lage: Okay, good.

Stamp: In September 1939, Frank Freidel arrived in Madison. He was born in New York City but grew up in southern California in a part of Los Angeles called Huntington Park. He had attended the University of Southern California as an undergrad and got an M.A. there. He was married when he came to Madison; his wife had also been a student at Southern Cal and had written a master's thesis there, so they both came with M.A.'s.

Frank was going to be Hesseltine's teaching assistant, and so the two of us for that year were teaching assistants together. That's how that friendship developed.

Lage: As you and Richard Current had been earlier.

Stamp: In '36-'37, I was a T.A. with George Winston Smith, '37-'38 with Richard Current, and now '39 to '40 with Frank Freidel.

Frank came from a Quaker family. He was a pacifist. His attitude toward FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] was very much like mine: hostile. That's interesting because he became a biographer of FDR. We got on very well. I liked his wife. They were living on a shoestring, as--actually, I was fairly affluent.

Marriage to Katherine Mitchell, 1939

- Stamp: On December twenty-sixth, I got married. My wife-to-be wanted, for reasons I don't understand, not to be married in Wisconsin--oh, I think I do understand. She wanted to go to Iowa to the little brown church in some little town in eastern Iowa, so we did.
- Lage: Did your family come?
- Stamp: No. Bob Baldwin, my undergraduate roommate, went with us, and her best girlfriend--they were our witnesses--and the four of us in my old jalopy drove from Madison to somewhere in Iowa. I can't remember the name of the town.
- Lage: It must have had some special significance.
- Stamp: There's a "little brown church in the vale" there. Horrible. There was a minister who was obviously making his living marrying people from all over, and after the ceremony he went out and rang the bell. It was one of the most unhappy occasions. My wife then had the flu, and she was feeling terrible that day and crying. I said, "Well, you've got to stop crying before I go in and marry you." [laughter] We drove back to Madison and had a sort of dinner in a restaurant in Madison that night. Bob went his way, and Kay's girlfriend went her way, and Kay and I settled down to married life.
- We found an apartment in Madison, a one-room efficiency, you know with a bed that comes down from the wall--
- Lage: Yes, a Murphy bed.
- Stamp: --and a dressing room and bath, and that's where we lived for the rest of the year.
- Lage: Did she continue to teach?
- Stamp: In Wisconsin, if a woman got married, she couldn't teach.
- Lage: That's amazing.
- Stamp: We were married in December. She was able to teach until the end of January to finish that term, and then she had to quit. Married women could not teach in those Depression years.
- Lage: So to get married, you gave up your income.

Stampp: You gave up your job.

Lage: Was it just economic?

Stampp: It was the Depression. They just simply didn't think that married women should be taking jobs away from unemployed men. [laughter] Unemployed women didn't seem to count, and if you're married, you're not unemployed, you're a housewife.

Lage: Right, keeping your one-room efficiency.

Stampp: Yes, you're a housewife, so she had to give up her job. I can't remember really what she did that year. There wasn't much housekeeping to do. She had a lot of friends around Madison, so that was the way that academic year ended.

I was still working on my dissertation. It was not finished. I really needed to get back to Indianapolis again for a while. I did work again in the Wisconsin Historical Society between '39 and '40, but I hadn't written anything yet. That's all there was to that year. It was a pleasant year. I got on with Hesseltine all right that year.

Lage: Did you have to go to his seminar again?

Stampp: I was out of graduate school as far as that was concerned. No, I had plenty of time just to work on my dissertation.

I had finished teaching up in Fond du Lac and the term ended in Madison. It was the same drudgery being a teaching assistant, making out the exams and grading the exams and attending lectures that I was hearing for the third time.

I had saved enough money so that in the summer of 1940, Kay and I went back to Indianapolis. As I remember, we must have got there some time in late June and stayed until early August, so I was there for about six weeks. Again, I worked full-time in the Indiana State Library and the Indiana Historical Bureau and the Indianapolis Public Library, and this time I had Kay with me to type notes for me. I would, in the newspapers in particular, indicate the things that I wanted typed out, and she would type them for me, so that helped.

By the end of July or early August, I finally finished my research on that dissertation, and I thought it was time for a holiday. So we left Indianapolis and headed east to go and see Dick Current. We had a lovely drive through southern Ohio. I had never been east before. I had never been east of Indiana. Through southern Ohio, through West Virginia, into Virginia, over

the Blue Ridge, we drove along the Blue Ridge, into Washington [DC]. We found a motel in Washington, and we spent three nights and two days in Washington, just seeing the city.

Trip to Washington, D.C., during Wartime Debates, 1940

Stamp: I had a letter of introduction to my senator, Robert M. LaFollette, and he gave us passes to the Senate. We were there on a day when they were debating foreign policy, as they were much of the time. This is when foreign policy was rather hot stuff, whether we should help--the summer of 1940 was after the fall of France, and the battle of Britain was going on, and the fight was being waged hot and heavy in the United States Senate over American aid to the Allies.

Lage: Were you engaged with all of these issues?

Stamp: I was very much engaged. I thought of World War II at the beginning very much in terms of World War I. I shared the views my father had in the First World War that this was another imperialist war, that there was nothing to choose between the two sides, and I wanted the United States to keep out. I was bitterly opposed to Roosevelt's foreign policy, and was convinced that he wanted to get the U.S. involved.

Lage: Did you keep up your activity with political groups and meetings?

Stamp: No. I was really academic now, but these were my feelings, my thoughts. My major professor shared these views, Frank Freidel shared these views, Dick Current shared these views. There was a whole group of graduate students that shared these views. We were called isolationists.

I never thought of myself as an isolationist. I was an internationalist in that I had always favored American entrance into the League of Nations, and I had always wanted the United States to join the World Court. I had read an awful lot in the 1930s about how the United States got involved in the First World War. I knew about the Nye Committee, the famous Nye Committee, in their investigation of the role of munitions makers and bankers and propagandists, so I really was very strongly opposed to our getting involved in the war and to Roosevelt's foreign policy.

Now I remember a remark that my professor made after the election of 1936. I voted for Norman Thomas but hoped that Roosevelt would win, wanting it both ways, and I was scared to

death that Landon might beat him. There was a magazine--I don't know whether you've ever heard of the *Literary Digest*--that had a poll which indicated that Landon was going to win. That was the end of that magazine, by the way. What they did was call people on the telephone and find out how they were going to vote. Well, an awful lot of people in 1936 didn't have telephones, and they were people who were going to vote for FDR. [laughter]

Lage: The early days of polling.

Stamp: That's right. So the *Digest's* prediction was enough to scare me, but it was a disaster for the *Literary Digest*. Roosevelt carried all but six states, as I recall--no, he carried all but Maine and Vermont.

Lage: Yes, it was a real landslide.

Stamp: Yes. He carried all but Maine and Vermont. The *Literary Digest* ceased publication soon after that.

Lage: Do you think it was related?

Stamp: Oh, absolutely. It was thoroughly discredited.

Getting back to 1940, I still felt, even after the fall of France and the battle of Britain, that we should keep out. I didn't want us to get involved.

So we were in Washington, and I had two days to see Washington. I walked the legs off of my poor wife, who was far less interested in Washington than I was, but I had to see everything.

After that, we drove to Annapolis, and I'm a little vague here. I think there was already a bridge across Chesapeake Bay. Dick Current was teaching at Eastern Maryland State College, on the eastern shore of Maryland. I can't remember the name of the town, but he had been teaching there since the fall of 1938. He took his exams, as I told you, and passed them in the spring of '38, and then went off there and taught and wrote his dissertation. He wrote a biography of Thaddeus Stevens for his dissertation, and by the time I got there, in 1940, he had finished it and had his Ph.D.

I had a lovely reunion with Dick, spent about four or five days there. His wife was something less than enthusiastic about having Kay and me suddenly descending. In fact, she simply let Dick do all the cooking.

Lage: Which probably was unusual in those days.

Stampp: Dick and I had a marvelous time. We managed to get off by ourselves and go to his office. Dick would say, "I must take you to my office," and we sat and had long talks about politics and foreign policy and our careers and our research interests.

Circuit Rider for University of Wisconsin Extension

Stampp: Some time in August we left and drove through Pennsylvania--through the beautiful farmland of southeastern Pennsylvania, through Ohio and back to Milwaukee.

Some time before that, I had succeeded in getting a full-time job in the University Extension, and in September 1940, Kay and I moved to Rhinelander, Wisconsin. That's way up in northern Wisconsin, up in the north woods, an area I loved because I had gone up there many times on vacations.

Lage: So this appealed to you as a place to spend some time?

Stampp: For one year, I thought it was great. The job was going to pay me \$1,800 a year--that was for ten months--so my salary suddenly became \$180 a month, and that was a lot to me. We found a nice apartment in a house that had been made into apartments. My teaching involved four towns. I taught one course in Rhinelander twice a week, then I had to go north of Rhinelander about twenty-five miles, I think, to a town called Eagle River. I had to go there twice a week. Those I did on the same day.

Then I had another circuit. I had to drive down to Wausau and to Antigo. I would do that twice a week. I would teach in the morning in Wausau and in the afternoon in Antigo. Each class ran for an hour and a half. That meant I was teaching twelve hours a week.

Lage: In different fields?

Stampp: American history and English history, yes. I wouldn't have wanted to stay there more than a year or maybe two, but certainly no more than that. It was rather interesting riding circuit.

Northern Wisconsin is very different from southern Wisconsin. It's colder, it began snowing in November, and I never saw the ground again until April. What I liked about it was that you didn't get those terrible thaws that you would get in southern

Wisconsin, where suddenly you would have a warm day and you would have slush all around. This was good, cold weather, and I was dressed properly. I had galoshes that came up to here and an overcoat that came down to here and thick mittens and ear muffs.

Lage: Were the roads clear so you could get around?

Stampp: I never missed a class all winter long. Sometimes I would have to follow the snowplow. I had no chains, but they knew how to take care of snow up there. As soon as there was a threat of snow, the snowplows were on the ready. So I never missed a class all winter long.

Lage: Did you like the teaching? Did you lecture?

Stampp: Yes, but the classes were small, twenty-five to thirty-five students, so the lectures were very informal. I didn't have to stand up with a mike or anything like that. I just sat and talked to them. They had reading assignments, of course, and I had to grade all the papers, but it was a nice year.

As I recall, I managed to write three chapters of my dissertation up there.

Lage: And teach these four classes.

Stampp: As well as teach, yes. It was a year of hard work.

I should mention that 1940 was when young men had to register for the draft, so in Rhinelander I registered for the draft.

Lage: What were your feelings about that?

Stampp: I was not happy about it, but I did it.

III TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND POLITICS DURING WORLD WAR II

University of Arkansas, 1941-42: Life and Teaching in Fayetteville

Stamp: In June 1941, we moved back down to Madison. Some time while I was up in Rhinelander, I had a letter from a young professor who used to teach at the University of Wisconsin, his name was Fred Harvey Harrington. He was a Ph.D. from New York University, and he was the young man in the History Department there, in American history. I got to know him fairly well the year that I was Hesseltine's teaching assistant and teaching in Fond du Lac. They came over to see Kay and me a number of times, and we went to see them.

The next year, the year I was in Rhinelander, he left Madison to go to the University of Arkansas to become head of the Department of History and Political Science as a full professor. Some time in the late spring of 1941, I heard from Hesseltine and got a letter from Harrington that there was a one-year job. Somebody was going on leave at the University of Arkansas, and Harrington wanted to offer it to me. I took it.

Lage: Were jobs few and far between?

Stamp: Oh, they were almost impossible. There just weren't jobs. I had applied for one job that year at Western Reserve, but no chance.

As a matter of fact, on my way to Indianapolis in the summer of 1940, I made a big detour to Western Illinois State Teachers College in McComb, Illinois, because there was a job there with a future. I carried in my pocket a letter from Hesseltine guaranteeing the president of the college that I would have my degree. How I would ever have written my dissertation, I don't know. [laughter]

I had an interview and told them something that wasn't quite true, that I was just on my way through or something (it was a big

detour to get there). I had an interview, and I showed my letter about how I would get my degree. He said, "Well, Mr. Stamp, you can walk down the corridor there and meet Professor So-and-so. He arrived here twelve years ago with the promise that he would have his degree, and he still doesn't have it."

Lage: He didn't want someone who didn't have his Ph.D. yet.

Stamp: Then he showed me a pile on his desk this high, and he said, "These are 200 applications for this job." I didn't get it. A man with a Ph.D. from Harvard got the job, and that was a lucky break for me.

Lage: Ph.D.'s from Harvard were what they were getting?

Stamp: Jobs were almost nonexistent, so I was delighted to take the job at Arkansas. I could have had one more year on the extension; I could have had a second year.

So in June we went back down to Madison, and we found an apartment. It was a terribly hot summer, I remember, and I spent the whole summer writing my dissertation. Before the summer was over, I had it all written except one concluding chapter. I showed it all to Hesseltine, and he approved it, thought it was good. I'm not very good in heat, especially humid heat, the kind we had in Wisconsin. I can remember sitting in a bathtub with a big board on the side, writing in the bathtub in cool water with my notes there.

Lage: There should have been a picture of that.

Stamp: [laughter] Yes, there should have. It was a frightfully hot summer.

By September, I had just one last chapter, about fifteen or twenty pages, I had to write, and early in September, we started for Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Lage: What an experience.

Stamp: That's where I taught for the year 1941-'42.

Lage: It was just a one-year job?

Stamp: It was a one-year fill-in job. This was the Department of History and Political Science. Unfortunately, the man on leave was a political scientist, which meant that I was going to be teaching just about everything except what I was qualified to teach.

I was told before I got there that I would have to teach a course in American government (that wasn't too difficult), a course in state and local government with special emphasis on the government of Arkansas.

Lage: You would need a little preparation for that, probably.

Stamp: I sure did. It was 1941, and the United States was well on the way to being involved in the war. Lend-Lease had been passed, and the United States was helping to convoy supplies to Britain and to Russia by then. Harrington, who was ever an opportunist, said, "Given these circumstances, I think it might be a good idea for you to teach a course in national defense problems." I'm the guy to teach that. [laughter]

Lage: Right! Did Harrington share any of your political background or know about it?

Stamp: Well, Harrington was a very cagey man politically. He knew how Hesselstine felt about the war. He also knew about Hicks and Curtis Nettels, the other two, who were ardent supporters of Roosevelt's foreign policy. He was cautious. He knew how I felt.

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Stamp: In Fayetteville we found a wonderful fully-furnished apartment for forty-two dollars a month: two bedrooms, a good-sized living room, dining room, and kitchen. We settled in, and I really felt this was great.

Fayetteville is way up in the northeast corner of Arkansas in the Ozarks--well, north of Fayetteville are the Ozarks. Then south are a series of not terribly high mountains, about 2,000 feet, called the Boston Mountains, and Fayetteville was in a valley. It was a charming little town, terribly isolated. The nearest city was Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was seventy miles away.

Lage: How large a town?

Stamp: About twenty-five hundred people. The University of Arkansas had a student body of about 3,000. This is the only place in my life where I, with my salary--I also taught summer school, so I got a few hundred extra for that--of \$1,800 a year, was in a really upper income group, so much so that all the merchants descended, sending me little gifts and asking me to open charge accounts.

Lage: That must have been a very new experience for you.

Stamp: Yes. Fayetteville was surrounded by submarginal farmers, real Arkies, who used to come into town on Saturdays. Fayetteville was the county seat, so there was a big red-brick courthouse in a square in the middle, and they used to gather there in their jalopies and just sit around--well, they did their shopping--but just sit around and visit.

Lage: Was there much of a black population?

Stamp: Very small. This is not cotton country; this is really hillbilly country. It was a very low-income area outside of the town.

You asked about the black population: there was a very small black population, couldn't have been more than sixty or seventy blacks in Fayetteville, but the Southern rules all applied. They were not admitted to the white schools, they were segregated in every social aspect, and did not vote. I remember the Methodist minister coming around and calling on me and inviting Kay and me to go to his church, telling me that they had set up such a nice little mission for the "colored" people, which made me just die to go to his church. [laughter]

Lage: How forthright were you able to be about your own views?

Stamp: I'll talk about that.

Let me tell you a little bit about the University of Arkansas at that time. The president of the University of Arkansas the year before I arrived--that is, from 1940 to '41--was Bill [J. William] Fulbright. Fayetteville was his hometown. Fulbright had just been fired as the president of the University of Arkansas because, as I heard, he had backed the wrong man for governor in 1940. The University of Arkansas was deep in politics. They had a new president whose name was Harding, and I never really got to know him very well.

Lage: Was this the one and only campus of the University of Arkansas?

Stamp: At that time, Fayetteville was the one and only campus. There was a black college, probably down in Little Rock but certainly not in Fayetteville.

I said I was sort of in the upper income bracket, but there was Mrs. Fulbright and Bill Fulbright who lived up on the hill, and they were the real aristocracy. Mrs. Fulbright owned the local newspaper, she owned the Coca-Cola bottling works, which is big business in the South, and she owned the textile mill which was just outside of town.

The textile mill had mill workers--all white, of course; blacks were never hired in the South as mill workers in those days. The mill workers lived on an unpaved street, a row of shacks, no electricity, no indoor plumbing. If there was anything I needed to really rouse my Marxist feelings, it was to go out and stand on the edge of this little row of shacks, then look up the hill at Mrs. Fulbright's mansion up on the top.

Lage: It was pretty clear.

Stamp: It was pretty clear, right.

Well, the university, although it was certainly not located anywhere in the South, was quite Southern. The faculty was overwhelmingly Southern. It used to be, according to the stories I heard, that the affluent cotton growers in southern Arkansas in good days used to send their sons to Vanderbilt, and in bad days--and these were bad days--they sent them to the University of Arkansas--no tuition, just little fees.

The faculty was very Southern. My colleagues in the History Department except for Fred Harrington came out of the South. I remember another political scientist came from Mississippi.

In my political science course, I got to voting patterns in the United States. I talked about the disenfranchisement of blacks in the South to my students. I went to this political scientist--his name was Henry Alexander--the man from Mississippi. I said, "Henry, I want to talk to you about--how they stop blacks from voting in Mississippi?" I couldn't get an answer. Henry would just say, "In Mississippi, blacks don't vote. Period." I said, "Why not?" He said, "Well, I told you. In Mississippi, blacks don't vote. Period."

Lage: This is the political scientist.

Stamp: That was the end of that.

I got on with the students very well. I taught my political science course; that wasn't very hard at all. State and local government was pretty awful, and I remember making one terrible mistake. I had to keep reading, to keep ahead of the students, some book on state and local government, and according to one book, Arkansas was one of the few states in the union that didn't have a lieutenant governor, and I told this to the class. Well, it happened that since that book was published, Arkansas had introduced a lieutenant governor, and one of my students corrected me on that. [laughter]

Lage: They must have realized you were a little out of your element. How did the community accept you and your wife?

Stampp: Oh, very well. They were really lovely people, and--it was very Southern. The social life was very Southern. I was told by the Harringtons, "You're in the South now, and you had better have some calling cards," so I had some printed. Sure enough, on Sundays couples would come and call on you, and then after sitting about a bit, they would leave their cards on the table as they walked out. Then we had to return the calls. All of this was strange to me.

I did manage to get into one group that I enjoyed very much. This consisted of the town doctor; Henry Alexander, the political scientist with whom I got on all right in spite of his funny notions; and a couple of other members of the history and political science department, for poker games. Fred Harrington was in there, too. This was a men-only thing. We had poker parties every now and then which I really enjoyed.

I took up golf. I had played golf a little bit in high school, and I was never very good. There was one man in the department who loved golf, so I played golf with him several times. I have never played golf since--wait a minute, I did a little bit in Berkeley later on.

My wife was pregnant when we got there. I'm trying to think of what else to say about that year.

Lage: I would like to hear something about the national defense class, how that went.

Stampp: That turned out very well. You know what I did? I turned it into a history of national defense problems. National defense problems during the American Revolution, national defense problems during the American Civil War, and national defense problems during the First World War, and a lot about corrupt contractors. I made it a thoroughly shabby story [laughs] and got through the course. I had them do some reading on contemporary national defense. I found some articles in *Harper's*, let them read those.

Lage: Was there debate? Was it a free atmosphere where you felt like you could really raise questions, like should we be--

Stampp: Should we be in the war?

Lage: This was the year we got in the war, wasn't it?

Stampp: This is the year; this is the year of Pearl Harbor, which came in December, and I was teaching this course right in the middle of it. Yes, I had better back up.

Pearl Harbor came on Sunday, December seventh. Fred Harrington and his wife came over, and Fred said, "Well, this changes everything." I said, "Not for me, it doesn't." I was convinced that FDR had done everything he could to maneuver the Japanese into an attack. He didn't expect it where it came; he probably thought it would come in the Philippines. Anyway, I didn't feel any differently at that time.

I wanted the Allies to win by then. Once the Soviet Union was invaded, then I became much more interested in the war. I still wanted us to keep out, but I certainly wanted the Allies to win. I was just following the kind of party line. The Soviet Union was in favor of American neutrality until the Soviet Union was attacked. American Communists wanted America to keep out of the war until the Soviet Union was attacked, and then everything changed.

Lage: You may have wanted the Allies to win, but--

Stampp: I wanted the Allies to win, and I was hoping that the Soviet Union could succeed in resisting the Nazi attack. I still didn't want the United States to get involved in the war, though.

Ph.D. Oral Exams with Hesseltine, Higby, and Perlman: December 10, 1941

Stampp: That fall--it's all connected with Pearl Harbor--I finished the last chapter of my dissertation, and I was to go back to Madison. Pearl Harbor was on the seventh, I think it was a Sunday, and I was to go back to Madison and take my Ph.D. exams the following Wednesday, I believe.

Lage: Now, would this be defending your dissertation?

Stampp: It was more than that. In addition to all those written exams I talked about, you had to go back and take a two-hour oral after your dissertation. Your dissertation was involved, but it was more than that. Frank Freidel was to go back, too. He had finished his dissertation, and Frank got a job at a little college in Alton, Illinois, called Shurtleff College, or Shirtless, as it was sometimes called. His salary was \$1,600 a year at Shurtleff.

The year that I had been teaching full time for the Extension, I bought a new car. I bought a nice Ford, a brand-new Ford coupe two-door. I had that down there, so I was to drive the day after Pearl Harbor up to Alton, Illinois, pick up Frank, then the next day the two of us would drive up to Madison. He would take his exam one day, and I would take mine the next day.

We got to Madison, and the atmosphere was amazing. Except for Hesselstine, the European historians were just very rabid supporters of Roosevelt's foreign policy, and of course terribly upset by Pearl Harbor.

I think I took my oral exam on the tenth of December. That day I think their minds were on Pearl Harbor and other things more than my exam. They did ask some questions. I had my usual trouble with Chester Penn Higby, the European historian, who asked me some impossible questions. Selig Perlman, the man with whom I took my outside field in economics, labor history and socialism and capitalism, was on the committee. He thought my dissertation was excellent. I got by with everyone except Higby.

After it was over, I was sent out then called back in, and everyone congratulated me except Higby. He just walked out and never said a word to me.

Lage: Now, was this something between the two of you, or was he like that?

Stamp: I had never taken any courses from him, remember?

Lage: Oh, that's right, you didn't take his classes.

Stamp: Yes. He could never forgive me for that, even though I had given him an explanation. I think I did very well in my oral exam.

So I passed, and I was a Ph.D. at last.

Lage: What a momentous time for that.

Stamp: Frank passed also. Frank and I both stayed with the Hesselstines at that time. Hesselstine was very good. He did everything he could to calm me down. I was terribly nervous about the exam and couldn't eat any lunch, I remember.

Lage: Was Freidel nervous also?

Stamp: Yes, he was nervous, too. It's nerve-racking.

Then I went from Madison, after I passed my exam, to Milwaukee just overnight to see my parents. I had a week's leave, I guess, from the University of Arkansas. I had an invitation from the Indiana Historical Society to come to Indianapolis and talk about anything. They were interested in me because of my dissertation on Indiana politics.

I arrived there and stayed overnight--I guess I stayed two nights there--and went to a breakfast meeting. I was supposed to talk on anything. I thought, "Who's thinking about anything except the war?" It was at a breakfast with maybe forty people there, all historians from the University of Indiana, from Butler University and a number of other smaller institutions. I decided to talk on the role of the historian or the duty of the historian in time of war. I reminded some of the older men about how some historians had behaved during World War I, when they became Four Minute Men and ran around spreading war propaganda.

I said, "I don't think that's what historians ought to be doing. I think you've got a new generation of students, and I think you ought to keep on teaching history--and teach good history." It went over very well. Anyone who didn't like it didn't say anything, because there were a lot of people who did like it: in other words, don't just become propagandists or agents of the government.

I got back to Fayetteville, and on March 23 my son was born, so he's an Arkie.

Lage: What is his name?

Stampp: This was not my doing--my wife wanted him named Kenneth, and so he took my first name and my wife's second name, Mitchell. So he's Kenneth Mitchell Stampp.

This is irrelevant, really, but we were both terribly conscientious parents. This was before [Benjamin M.] Spock, and the wisdom of the time was that it's best for babies to be on rigid schedules. I can remember our being very conscientious about doing everything on schedule. If our son got hungry a half hour before time, he just darn well would have to wait. He would cry, but we would sit and look at our watches. Isn't that awful?

Lage: [laughs] Yes. My mother has told me that same thing.

Stampp: The spring came, and I began thinking about 1942-'43. I kept hoping that something might turn up at Arkansas, but nothing did turn up. Some time in the spring I thought, I can go back to

Wisconsin and teach for the Extension one more year, so I knew I was safe for another year.

Hired at University of Maryland, 1942

Stamp: Some time in the spring, Fred Harrington and Hesselstine heard about a job at the University of Maryland. The man with whom I had been a teaching assistant the first time, George Winston Smith, who had his degree by then, was teaching at American University in Washington, D.C. It wasn't a great place, so he wanted the Maryland job, too. Harrington, who knew both George and me, said, "Well, you know, George can get that job at Maryland. You can get the job at American University, his job."

This didn't happen very often--it was one time when I decided I was going to be a bit aggressive. I said, "Well, look. They have my dossier at Maryland as well as George's. I want to be a candidate for the Maryland job."

I was, and I got it. They decided to hire me, and it was finally a permanent job. I knew then that I was set for the next year. I stayed on in Fayetteville during the summer, teaching the summer term. I think I earned \$300 for that.

When the summer session was over in early August, we packed our things and our baby and drove back to Wisconsin. We knew that finding a place to live near Washington, now that the war was on, was going to be a real problem. So I left Kay and the baby in Wisconsin, where she stayed part-time with her mother and father in Dodgeville and part of the time with my parents in Milwaukee. I left them there, and I drove to Washington.

The University of Maryland is at College Park, which is about five miles northeast of the District of Columbia. I found out that I could temporarily room with a Maryland professor and his wife--they had no children and he was in agriculture, as I recall--while I went hunting. So I got settled with them and went to the university and got to meet people there. Actually, come to think of it, I had to start teaching very soon. They were just going over to a three-semester system, and I guess it must have been the fall semester. They must have begun in late August.

I spent my days for a week or so looking for a place to live. Finally, I found an unfurnished apartment, it was really the ground floor of an old house, in a little suburban town near the District line called Mount Rainier. I rented it. I can't

remember the rent, whether it was a bit high--my salary at the University of Maryland was to be \$2,000 a year, which included teaching three semesters, so it may sound good but it wasn't all that good.

Then there was the problem of furnishings. I had a couple hundred dollars maybe. I remembered my sister had married her boss--she and her husband had a lot of money. At least at that time it looked like a lot of money. He lent me \$300 so I could go out and buy some furniture. Then Kay and the baby came by train, and they were there by September.

The second or third day that I was in Maryland, I met a young man with a Ph.D. from Columbia University named Richard Hofstadter.

Lage: He was in the department?

Stamp: He had just been employed, along with me. I was brought there to teach American diplomatic history. I had the job of a man who had been teaching diplomatic history at Maryland and had just left the university to take a job in the State Department during the war, and he never came back, didn't intend to come back.

Lage: Now, why was the draft not hanging over your head at this point?

Stamp: It was. I didn't know whether I was going to be called. I never was called--never called. I don't know whether there were a lot of volunteers out there. Well, it's not quite that. In 1942, I was married, I had a child, and I had just turned thirty.

Lage: So you were a little on the old side.

Stamp: I seemed always to be one step ahead. I was just married, and they weren't calling married men before we got in the war. Then I had a child. Then I turned thirty. The draft board never called me, and I was not going to volunteer. So I was waiting, waiting, waiting, and it never came. I don't know whether I would have passed the physical. I was very thin.

I'll tell you more about that, because Dick Hofstadter and C. Wright Mills were called by the draft board and were both rejected on the grounds that they suffered from hypertension. They were four years younger--I was thirty when I came there, and Dick Hofstadter was twenty-six.

About the same time, I met C. Wright Mills, the sociologist. His office in the Sociology Department was just on the other side of a corridor, so we were all together.

Lage: Freidel came there too, didn't he?

Stamp: No, the next year, Freidel continued to teach at Shurtleff College. The following year, 1943, there was another job at Maryland, and I got it for Frank. Our little group consisted of C. Wright Mills and Dick Hofstadter and Frank Freidel and me. Those were about as stimulating colleagues as I could ever hope to have. Those were four great years.

I want to tell you a lot about the University of Maryland and what kind of a place it was. It was a terrible place--the university was in a wonderful location, obviously, a historian's dream: the Library of Congress nearby, and the National Archives--but we had the most unbelievable president you ever heard of, and that's going to take some time to tell you about.

Lage: Let's begin there next time, then.

Four Good Years at Maryland: Colleagues and University Politics

[Interview 4: May 7, 1996] ##

Lage: This is the fourth session with Ken Stamp, and today is May 7, 1996. We've got you settled at the University of Maryland, with the promise of the story of the university president and of what you called your four wonderful years there--

Stamp: Yes, they were good years.

Lage: --with intellectual and friendship connections. So I'll let you begin with what seems appropriate.

Stamp: All right. The University of Maryland is in College Park, which is about five miles, as I recall, northeast of the District of Columbia. When I arrived in August of 1942, the enrollment was about 3,000 students. Maryland was a southern state in that there was segregation in the public schools. There were no blacks at the University of Maryland. There was a college in Maryland for black students.

Lage: Was that a written, or just an understood thing?

Stamp: Oh, that was probably part of the state constitution, or at least part of state law--under the separate but equal doctrine blacks and whites were separated, not equally, but they were supposed to be equal.

Lage: What about women? They were late to admit women.

Stampp: The University of Maryland had women students, I would say in equal numbers with men students. I might say this in advance: by the second year that I was there, by 1943, a large part of my students were G.I.'s. The War Department had a program called the Army Specialized Training Program, and large numbers of G.I.'s, before they were sent overseas, were attending classes at the University of Maryland and I presume at other nearby institutions.

Lage: Taking regular history classes?

Stampp: They were taking courses--I was giving a survey course in American history, and they were taking it. I had classes of perhaps thirty to thirty-five G.I.'s. I quickly divided them into those who were just coming so they didn't have to do something else and those who really were serious about getting some credits and eventually getting a degree. I divided them, I said, "Look, if you don't want to listen to the lectures, just sit in the back. You can read your comic books. Just sit in the back and don't make any disturbance," and that worked out all right.

Lage: Somehow it seems strange, that in the midst of this war, they were sending G.I.'s to learn about American history.

Stampp: Well, this was in their training months, and apparently that was long enough for them to actually go through a whole term, a whole semester. There was a similar program in England at Shrivenham, an Army Specialized Training Program, and professors from the United States were sent over to Shrivenham in England to run classes in history and in political science and philosophy. So it was a pretty large program.

Lage: Did that increase the student body numbers?

Stampp: Yes. I don't know by how many, but I know that probably--I'll try to figure out the percentages--probably 25 percent of the students I taught were in the army, were G.I.'s at that time.

University President Curly Byrd

Stampp: Maryland was not one of the distinguished state universities in the United States at that time. It has become a good deal more distinguished since then. One of the reasons was the president. The president was Curly Byrd, no relation to the distinguished

Byrd family of Virginia. I think probably the Byrd family of Virginia insisted that this be well known.

Curly Byrd began before I arrived there as the football coach. He was a slick politician, and he persuaded--I don't remember whether the governing body was called the board of regents, but let's call it the board of regents--persuaded them to create the office of vice president of the university and to appoint him to the office. He always claimed that leaving the football team and going into administration was a demotion, but that tells you something about him.

From the position of vice president, so I heard, he cut the throat of the president--politically--and got promoted to president of the university. So he was there as president in 1942, and he was there when I left in 1946. Such a president I have never known, and hope no one will ever know again.

He was a despot. He ran the university from his office. He made appointments in departments without consulting people in the departments. He fired people, he fired deans. One of the first things he did after I arrived was to fire the dean of the College of Letters and Science, who was a very good man. He was the protector of the liberal arts at Maryland. But all the time I was there, the dean of the School of Business Administration was the appointed acting dean of the College of Letters and Science. This was a man who had no idea what letters and science was like, or what history was like, or philosophy.

I remember I used to do my teaching there on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. I had to teach twelve hours. That meant four lecture courses, so I lectured four times on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Ultimately, there was a class of G.I.'s and a couple of classes of lower division students that I lectured to in American history. The first couple of years, my advanced course, my upper division course, was a course in American foreign policy, the history of American foreign policy, because the man I replaced was in that field.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, I went to the Library of Congress or the National Archives and did research. The dean found out about this and called the chairman of our department and said, "I understand Mr. Stamp is not on campus on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays." The chairman said, "Well, yes, he does his teaching on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays and Saturdays he goes to the Library of Congress and reads and does research."

The dean said, "Well, why does he have to go to the Library of Congress? We've got a library on our campus." [laughter] The library had about 120,000 volumes at that time. It was a pathetic library, and there was no way you could do research there. But that gives you some idea of the kind of man the acting dean of letters and science was.

Lage: Were you defended in this practice?

Stamp: I was defended. My chairman--I'll talk about him in a minute--stood up for me, and I kept on doing it. I'm afraid that our chairman got in a bit of trouble on my behalf as a result of that. He got into a lot of trouble because of his department, as a matter of fact.

Lage: Had it been the chairman who hired you?

Stamp: As far as I know, the chairman initiated the search. I don't know how many places he wrote to. I know he wrote to Wisconsin. Ultimately, it was Byrd who approved the appointment. I'll say more about that a little bit later, when Frank Freidel came there. I talked to the president about Frank Freidel. I knew that the chairman of the department wasn't going to be able to do this by himself.

The department was a small one. The chairman of the department was a man named Wesley Gewehr. He was in his sixties, early sixties, I think--late fifties, early sixties. He seemed very old to me then, a very lovely man. He had written one book on--I think it had something to do with antislavery among Quakers in Virginia. After that, he did no more research; he ran the department, and as he said to us frequently, "I do the work in this department so you can do your research."

Lage: So he appreciated what he had given up.

Stamp: That's right, and we appreciated it, too. We were all very fond of Wesley Gewehr.

The other man in American history who was there was a man by the name of Hayes Baker Carruthers--I got it mixed up because we used to call him Caker Bothers--but it was Baker Carruthers. The interesting thing about him, really, was his wife. His wife was a feminist who insisted on maintaining her maiden name. She was a student at the University of Maryland and earned an M.A. degree, but they refused to award the degree to her in her maiden name. They insisted that the name on the diploma would have to be Baker Carruthers. So she refused to take the degree. They were at a

standstill from then on. The university wouldn't budge, and she wouldn't budge.

Lage: Where did her husband stand?

Stampp: Oh, he absolutely stood with her on that. He was an older man, too; he was a man, oh, I would say in his upper fifties at that time.

There were two or three European historians. One of them, Gordon Frange, left a year after I was there to join the army. He was a specialist in German history and spoke German fluently and had done his research in German history, so when he joined the army, they sent him to Japan--

Lage: [laughs] Oh, I should have guessed.

Stampp: --first to Hawaii, and he was in Japan after the occupation. Isn't that amazing?

Lage: Yes.

Stampp: That's where he was and apparently was one of MacArthur's right-hand men there.

Another man was Arthur Silver, who taught English history. He was, as he told me many times, a birthright Quaker and a very good one. He ultimately got in trouble with the university, too, as I'll tell you later on.

That was just about the whole department. There were seven or eight people, as I recall. We had one secretary, who incidentally was Japanese. There was a program conducted by the American Friends Service Committee to find jobs for young Japanese outside of the concentration camps on the West Coast, and this young lady had come out of one of the concentration camps and was secretary to the history department. She was American-born, but nevertheless, she was in one of those camps.

Richard Hofstadter

Stampp: A day or two after I arrived, I met Richard Hofstadter.

Lage: Now, was he new that year too?

Stampp: He had just arrived. He had earned his degree from Columbia University. I never quite understood with whom he worked. I think, as a matter of fact, he worked on his own. Merle Curti, who was at that time in Teachers College at Columbia University (soon after he went to Wisconsin) always claimed Richard Hofstadter as one of his students. Henry Steele Commager, who was at Columbia then, claimed that Hofstadter was his student.

Hofstadter said, "Well, I don't know who was my major professor." He picked his subject, he wrote a dissertation on social Darwinism in America, a first-rate dissertation, which was ultimately published [*Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945].

I remember that the first time we met, we walked down the campus--the campus was up on a hill--and crossed the main highway between Washington and Baltimore to a drug store. We had lunch at the drug store and sort of looked at each other suspiciously. I, coming from Wisconsin with a German background, must have belonged, as I think Hofstadter thought, at least sympathetically to the German-American Bund; and I, being a Midwesterner, was looking rather suspiciously at this guy from New York, Columbia. So we sort of felt each other out. I remember that one of the first things I had to do was explain to Hofstadter that all Germans in Wisconsin were not Nazi sympathizers--

Lage: How interesting!

Stampp: --and that my family had been Social Democrats; that although my father supported the Second World War--our involvement in it--I had been, not on isolationist or pro-German grounds, opposed to it for quite different reasons, for ideological reasons. Ultimately, that satisfied him, and Dick and I very soon became good friends.

Lage: Was there a strong pro-Nazi contingent from the Midwest Germans?

Stampp: Not terribly strong. There weren't any Germans that I knew who were pro-German. Even my family was not pro-German in the First World War when they opposed our being involved. It was strictly an ideological thing, a Social Democratic anti-imperialist stand. There was a fair amount of isolationism, but that term isolationism was used much more broadly than I think it deserved to be. I was labeled an isolationist, but I never thought of myself as an isolationist, because I had favored our joining the League of Nations and the World Court. I certainly didn't want the United States to be isolated from the world, but that was different from the question of whether the United States should be involved again in a second European war. At least, so it seemed to me.

Lage: But there must have been some thought, in Hofstadter's mind at least, that these sympathies existed.

Stampp: There was a lot of misapprehension, I think, about Midwestern isolationism. Now, there were lots of Midwestern isolationists, and Charles Lindbergh, of course, was one of the leading figures. They wanted the United States to stay out of the World Court, stay out of the League of Nations, stay out of this war, and solve its own domestic problems. To the extent that trade was necessary, very well; but that doesn't mean we have to get involved in the internal politics of Europe. As if we could stay out of them if we were going to be involved in international trade!

So there was a lot of that, but that's not where I stood, and it's not where my friends whom I knew in graduate school who shared my views stood. I don't know of any one of them who had been opposed to our joining the League of Nations or the World Court, or thinking that we could just sort of wrap ourselves in a cocoon and--. I know that there was a lot of real, true isolationism in the Midwest, and not only in the Midwest. There was some on the East Coast, too.

Lage: You and Hofstadter got it worked out. That's the important thing.

Stampp: Yes, Hofstadter and I got it worked out. It turned out that--I'm just wondering whether I should begin talking about C. Wright Mills--it turned out that Hofstadter was not about to volunteer or serve in the U.S. Army if he could possibly avoid it, and he was very happy when he was not taken because of hypertension.

Lage: He came out of a radical--?

Stampp: Hofstadter was married to Felice Swados, who was a writer. She had published a novel by that time. In a way, I think Felice was more radical than Dick Hofstadter. He had gone to the University of Buffalo as an undergraduate, and he had gotten involved in radical politics in the 1930s. I believe he joined the Communist party briefly. As he told me once, he got out because he couldn't stand the people he had to meet in the party. Moreover, as he told me and wrote ultimately to me, he was really not cut out to be an activist. He was much too intellectual and much too involved in writing and research. He had participated as a picket in one of the steel strikes of the 1930s, but I think that was about it. That was probably where he decided this was not the life for him. He always afterwards compared himself to me. He said, "You have more passion in your politics than I have in mine." That was the difference between us.

Hofstadter went to Maryland to teach a course in American intellectual history, but for the rest, he had the same programs I did: taught G.I.'s and taught survey courses in American history, but he did teach a course in American intellectual history. Hofstadter and Gewehr and I ran a kind of senior seminar for a handful of students who were majoring in history. They did reading, and we had discussions. That was rather nice.

Lage: Were there graduate students?

Stampp: There was a graduate program there. While I was there, one student, a woman from North Carolina named Alda Gregory got an M.A. degree, and one other student, who had been an undergraduate in American University in Washington, named Walter Sanderlin, actually got a Ph.D.

Lage: It wasn't frequent.

Stampp: To the best of my recollection, those were the only graduate students we had in the history department while I was there. Walter Sanderlin wrote a very good dissertation on the building of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal which was published. It was a federal project, and the book was called *The Great National Project*.

Radical Sociologist C. Wright Mills

Stampp: The history department was a big room, and on the other side was sociology. In the sociology department was a young sociologist named C. Wright Mills, who had arrived the year before. He went to the University of Texas, then got his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin.

Lage: He was from Texas, wasn't he?

Stampp: He was from Texas, yes. He came from San Antonio. But he was the oddest Texan I've ever met. You wouldn't know it. He worked with a man, I think his name was Becker, but I'm not sure. He and his major professor had a falling out before he got his degree. Mills had a way of having falling outs with almost everybody. In some ways, he was impossible. I remember his telling me that after he took and passed his oral exam at Wisconsin, as he walked out of the room, his major professor--I think it was Becker, but whoever he was--looked at him and said, "Mills, go to hell." Mills said he said in reply, "After you, Professor." [laughter]

Lage: Was he contemporary with you at Wisconsin?

Stampp: He must have been, but I didn't know him. I didn't do any work in sociology. As I said, he had come to Maryland in 1941, so he had been there a year. He and Hofstadter were the same age. Actually, Hofstadter, Freidel, and Mills were all four years younger than me. They were twenty-six when I arrived, and I was thirty. I also remember Mills, soon after we met, pontificating, as he frequently did, about how you get ahead and whether you know you're going to get ahead in the profession. He said, "Well, I'll tell you. If you haven't made it when you're thirty, you're never going to make it." I looked at myself, having just turned thirty, thinking, "Well, that's it for me."

Mills was a radical. He was probably more radical than any of the rest of us.

Lage: Intellectually or socially?

Stampp: In every way--well, socially, intellectually. He was not an activist, if that's what you mean. He was a radical in his writing and a radical in his philosophy. I remember--we began having bag lunches in my office or Hofstadter's office or Mills' office almost every noon, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday--I wasn't there Tuesday and Thursday--and talking about the war, talking about what the country was going to be like after the war.

We had fantasies of a terrible situation, thinking about the American Legion following World War I and their very conservative position and the power they wielded in the country, thinking also that this army was vastly larger than the army in the First World War. We had fantasies about a country that was going to become fascist. All these G.I.'s were going to come home and join the American Legion and become fascists, militarists, and so on.

Lage: Were you worried about economic depression following the war?

Stampp: No. The war followed the depression, and things were humming. We weren't thinking so much about that, but we were thinking about ideology. We assumed that they would all be militarists. It was a bad guess about what G.I.'s became after the war. This was probably Mills' fantasy more than the rest of us, but we all thought it was possible.

Mills regarded me rather suspiciously. My friendship came after one lunch. We were talking about politics and about capitalism and socialism; I remember sort of expressing my feeling that whatever the shortcomings of socialism, it would be far preferable to what we had now, and Mills got up and came over and

shook my hand. I was admitted to the fraternity after that.
[laughter]

Lage: What an interesting milieu.

Stampp: Yes. There's no point in my going into a lot of detail about it. We were very much concerned about American politics and about American society, and very radical.

Lage: Did the friendship influence your writing of history, your interest in sociology or intellectual history?

Stampp: Oh, sure. Hofstadter and Mills had a lot of impact on me, but I'm not sure that I had much on Mills, though I read manuscripts of his. When Hofstadter wrote his second book, which was *The American Political Tradition*, he acknowledged something on the inside--if I can find it, I probably can't. [moves away from microphone] Anyway, he wrote a nice little thing in the front saying, "To Ken, whose influence can be found everywhere inside." That's the way I feel about my writing, too; you couldn't have an intellectual like Hofstadter around you for four years without being influenced by him, and the same for Mills.

We became very close socially as well as academically. Hofstadter his first year lived in an apartment some distance away with his wife, Felice. After the first year at Maryland, I found an apartment in another town a little closer to the university called Hyattsville. We had a very nice apartment there, and very soon after I got there, I found an apartment for Dick Hofstadter, so the Hofstadters and we lived in the same apartment complex.

Lage: Were your wives friends?

Stampp: They became very good friends. They were very different. My wife was totally a nonintellectual; Felice was very intellectual and very much involved in her own writing, and very radical, and sort of making sure that Dick didn't stray from his radicalism. Mills lived out in Greenbelt, which was a housing project a few miles further out from College Park. We were together weekends. I can remember Mills' first wife, Freya, made a wonderful casserole called Texas Hash, which we had frequently.

Mills at that time was almost a teetotaller. He did drink wine. We never had hard liquor, didn't with Mills, anyway. I was a little less that way. I had Scotch now and then. These were nice evenings. Felice was pregnant, I think, by the end of the first year. Their son, Dan Hofstadter, was born while they were still at Maryland.

At the end of the first year, there was another opening, another possible job in the department. I talked to Curly Byrd and my chairman, too, about Frank Freidel, who was teaching at this little college, Shurtleff, and he was hired. At the end of the first year, Frank and his wife, Beth--they had a child then--moved to the area, and they took the apartment that we had. In other words, we moved out, they moved in. We moved to this place in Hyattsville. So Frank was very close, as well as Hofstadter, and Frank very quickly became part of this group.

Frank had a Quaker background, he was a pacifist. He went to the Friends meeting house. I went with him a couple of times.

Lage: Did it appeal to you as a religion?

Stampp: I thought very seriously for a while, because of my pacifism, of becoming a Quaker. These were not orthodox Quakers. This Quaker meeting house in Washington was a lovely place, lovely building. These were liberal Quakers, and you could believe almost anything. There were men in uniform who came to the Quaker meeting. As far as I could tell, you could be an atheist and be a Quaker, as long as you accepted certain ethical standards.

Lage: You could be a member of the armed forces, or an atheist. That is pretty broad for the Quakers.

Stampp: Yes. Well, the nonorthodox Quakers were fairly liberal, as I recall. I didn't join. What stood in the way ultimately was my coming out here, leaving Washington and Frank.

Academic Freedom Issues at Maryland

Stampp: In late 1943 or early 1944--must have been early 1944--Byrd announced that the teaching load was going to be increased from twelve hours a week to eighteen hours a week, with no extra pay, and it was year round. There were three semesters, so there was no summer holiday. Up to that point, there had never been a faculty meeting. The history department was so small that you could hardly call it a meeting when they met, and we did have a few meetings, but there had never been a faculty meeting.

There was considerable outrage in the university about this, but it centered in the history and sociology departments.

Lage: [laughs] I can imagine why.

Stamp: We had a mimeograph machine, and we began cranking out protests which we circulated in the faculty--Mills, Hofstadter, Freidel, and I.

Lage: What was his rationale? Was it a wartime measure?

Stamp: Well, wait. Yes, you're right.

As a result of this, there was a demand that we have a faculty meeting, and so there was a faculty meeting. The presiding officer at the faculty meeting was Curly Byrd.

Lage: No strong faculty senate tradition.

Stamp: No, absolutely--there was no such thing as a senate there. Byrd was there to answer questions. A number of questions were raised about, "How can anybody teach that many hours and do a decent job." Byrd said, I remember very clearly, "You people complain about working eighteen hours a week when our G.I.'s are fighting twenty-four hours a day, where do you get off?" That sort of thing.

It just happened that the spokesman for the history department was neither Hofstadter nor Freidel nor me, but a European historian--I'm sorry, I can't remember his name. He was a clergyman, and he was a doctor of divinity who was teaching history. He got up and spoke, and with Byrd sitting there, he had some unpleasant things to say about the way the university was being run.

Lage: He might have been a good person to be the spokesman.

Stamp: He was very good. He probably said a couple of things, slightly in bad temper, things that would have been better not to say. In any case, he was fired. It was just like that; he was out at the end of the year.

We went to the AAUP [American Association of University Professors] in Washington, the headquarters were in Washington--Frank and Hofstadter and I. I can't remember whether Mills went. We were all members of the AAUP, and we wrote to them first, then went down and told them what was going on at Maryland--that the university was run as a dictatorship, that Byrd was going to make these changes in teaching loads and so on, and we wanted the AAUP to investigate. They wouldn't. They wouldn't touch it.

Lage: Did you have a sense of why?

Stamp: The AAUP was taking on little colleges. They weren't going to attack something like this. All of us sent in our resignations to the AAUP. I've never joined again. I have never forgiven them for not taking it on. This was one of the most egregious violations of every principle of academic freedom, the firing of that history professor.

Lage: The firing of the professor, especially.

Stamp: Yes. Incidentally, Frank Freidel left in the fall of 1945 to go off to Stillwater, Oklahoma, and go into the Japanese language program. He joined the navy. He did this as a volunteer; he was afraid he was going to be drafted anyway.

Frank was fired.

Lage: He was fired?

Stamp: That year, he left, but he was fired, he couldn't come back again.

Lage: Oh, I see, he was fired while he was gone.

Stamp: He was fired at about the time he left. Curly Byrd found out that the hotbed of all this trouble was somewhere in the history department. I don't know whether he knew about C. Wright Mills, but somehow he got the notion that the real ringleader of this was Frank Freidel, poor Frank Freidel who was not the ringleader of it at all. I don't know who was, but it certainly was not Frank, but Byrd decided that Frank Freidel was the person.

Lage: Good heavens. So he didn't know who was cranking out the mimeographs.

Stamp: Well, he knew they came out of that department. Gewehr got a lot of the heat for it, for having these guys around in his department. I remember writing that year, 1945, to Byrd about someone else in European history that I thought would be a good person to have there, and he wrote back a letter to me, which I think I still have, saying, "Well, it depends on what kind of a person this is. If he is willing to come here and do his teaching and his research and mind his own business, I could have him around here; but if he thinks he's going to run the university, he had better not come here. I don't want any more of those Wisconsin people."

Lage: After all, you're the one that persuaded him to hire Freidel.

Stamp: That's right, and he blamed it on Wisconsin people. Well, that would include C. Wright Mills. It was in this little area, and these were the Wisconsin people. He didn't want any more people like that around.

Job Hunting, Losses, and Intellectual Connections

Lage: Did you feel threatened? Were you worried about your tenure?

Stamp: You know, I didn't. I don't know why, but I didn't. I was very active in it, I helped to run that mimeograph machine, but I had been trying awfully hard to find a job somewhere else. In 1945-'46, I was very actively looking for a job.

Let's see--no, in 1944 I was brought down to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and interviewed and spent a day there. In June 1945 I was offered a job, a tenured position at about \$1,000 more than I was getting at Maryland--\$1,000 then was a lot of money. I called Byrd on the telephone--I was teaching at Wisconsin that summer--and told him I had the offer. He said, "Well, we like you around here"--something about my being a good teacher, so he matched the salary and gave me a promotion to associate professor. So I stayed at Maryland. I didn't like Knoxville very much, and I didn't know that Tennessee was going to be all that much better than Maryland, so I did stay.

We were all job-hunting. Hofstadter was looking for another job, Mills was looking for another job, so was I, so was Frank. We all wanted to get out of there if we possibly could.

Lage: It probably wasn't the best time to be looking for work.

Stamp: It was not a very good time. Then in 1945, there was a chance of a job at Johns Hopkins, and I went up to Johns Hopkins and spent a day there. The chairman of the department then was Charles Barker, who was in American intellectual history. The job didn't materialize. It isn't that they hired someone else, but it looked as if they might hire someone and didn't. So that fell through.

Then there was a job at Swarthmore, and I was brought up for an interview there in the spring of 1946, late winter or early spring. That job didn't materialize. That one I really thought I was going to get, and it was a bitter disappointment to me that they postponed making an appointment, as I recall. So I began to think, I've got another year at Maryland.

Meanwhile, Hofstadter had been called up for his physical and flunked it. C. Wright Mills had been called up for his physical and flunked it, both on--

Lage: This hypertension?

Stamp: --hypertension, and I've talked about that before.

Lage: And you were not called up but maybe thought you were going to be.

Stamp: I was never called up. I never heard from my draft board. I know I registered. And I wasn't about to volunteer. I might not have passed it either; I was awfully thin then, and I didn't look like a very promising physical specimen at that point.

In the summer of 1944, Felice Hofstadter was in our apartment one day and asked my wife to feel a lump she had somewhere in here. Soon after that, she found that she had cancer of the liver. She went back to her family in Buffalo. Her father was a doctor, and Hofstadter's family lived in Buffalo, too. She went back to Buffalo. Liver cancer is terminal cancer, at least at that time it was; there was no such thing as liver transplants. Hofstadter took a leave of absence for the year 1944-1945 and stayed with Felice.

It was a terrible year. At the end of the year, she died. She died in the early summer of 1945. That was the year that Dick Hofstadter, trying to do something, began working on his book *The American Political Tradition*, because it was something he could do there in the public library. This was not going to be manuscript research; it was going to be reading published sources, mostly. Hofstadter was never a manuscript kind of researcher anyway, and so he got along quite well with that book that year.

She died some time in the summer of 1945, and Hofstadter came back that year, 1945-1946. Mills was still there; Frank had left for the navy.

My chronology is going to be a little mucky here, but some time in that period, '44 to '45, we met Dwight Macdonald. Do you know who he is?

Lage: It's certainly a familiar name.

Stamp: Dwight Macdonald was a kind of Trotskyist at that time, and he was about to start a magazine called *Politics*. Dwight Macdonald became a very well-known critic. He wrote for the *New Yorker* and other publications. He talked to Hofstadter, Mills, Frank, and me about making contributions to *Politics*. I can't remember whether

Mills did. I'm quite sure that Dick Hofstadter didn't. I wrote two long review essays for *Politics*, and Frank wrote one long essay, too. He was a very interesting man. He would come through Washington--sometimes we had lunch with him. Then he would come visit us in the history department, so he was another one of the intellectuals that I got to know and like there.

Another was a woman philosopher-historian named Adrienne Koch, who ultimately came to Berkeley and taught here.

Lage: Oh, and she was teaching at Maryland?

Stamp: I think she was teaching at New York University, but she was around Washington a great deal, and we saw her frequently. She was another one of the interesting people I met while I was there.

We were all busy with our research. Mills, when I first arrived there, was collaborating with a sociologist at Wisconsin named--I think it's Hans Gerth--in a collection of the writings of Max Weber, and ultimately it was published. The book was called *From Max Weber*. Then after that, he began to work on his book *White Collar*.

Lage: Would the ideas that he was formulating be part of the subjects of your discussions?

Stamp: Oh, yes. [laughs] Mills--I very much enjoyed him, but as a Freudian as well as a Marxist, he was always psychoanalyzing us.

Lage: That's a little irritating.

Stamp: Oh, I know. We knew that he had a file on us, all of us--his observation about Hofstadter's family, and so on. He was always watching us to make sure that we weren't "sellouts," as he put it, that we didn't deviate from his radical party line. He was always suspicious of us, especially Hofstadter, that Hofstadter was not passionate enough about his political feelings.

Perhaps I ought to go back, then, before I get to the end of Maryland, because I got involved in my second research project there. Is this okay to begin talking about?

American Historical Association Presidential Election, 1944

Lage: Yes. Will you also talk about your efforts to defeat the president-elect at the 1944 American Historical Association election?

Stampp: Oh. Well, maybe I ought to talk about that before I get into my research.

The American Historical Association was having rather rump meetings during the war because of transportation problems--really, the meetings consisted largely of people who were close to the East Coast. I remember one meeting in some hotel in Washington that couldn't have had more than 150, 200 people there. The nominating committee in 1944 announced that it was going to nominate Carlton J. H. Hayes of Columbia University as president. Hayes had made it quite clear that he was sympathetic toward Franco. Looking back, I don't know that what we did was a very good idea. We tried to prevent his being elected president. I really don't like politics to get into professional organizations, and this really was doing it.

Lage: But at the time, you hadn't thought about the implications?

Stampp: Well, I hadn't really thought through what it would mean if the historical association--professional societies--would begin taking political stands as societies. I changed my mind on that later on.

Anyway, we decided that he shouldn't be elected president. He was vice president, as I recall.

Lage: Now, who's "we"?

Stampp: Well, "we" meaning--Hofstadter was up in Buffalo at that time, but Frank Freidel and I began writing to people. There was someone in one of the New York institutions who was very much involved in this, too, and we began circulating letters everywhere and got lots of people to sign a petition to bypass Hayes, to instead elect the person who was going to be chosen for vice president--I can't remember who it was any more. In other words, we were nominating another person for president.

The business meeting of the American Historical Association was in December of 1944, and the presiding officer was the president at that time. He tried to cut us off on the grounds that there was something irregular about our procedure, and therefore, there should not be a vote. One historian, who had not

actually signed our petition, Howard K. Beale, stood up and protested vigorously against this attempt to stifle our proposal. He said they deserved to at least have it come to a vote.

Eventually, the president backed down, and we did have a vote. We lost, but we had a good minority, I think it was probably about one third of the historians who supported us on that. Hayes was elected president.

Hofstadter signed our petition up in Buffalo, and then he said he had read something about Hayes in *Commonweal* that made him feel that we were wrong, but he had already signed the petition.

Lage: That made him think that Hayes perhaps was not sympathetic to Franco?

Stampp: Yes. Hayes was teaching at Columbia at this time. Then things got kind of nasty. Frank and I wrote a letter to Hofstadter saying, "Well, we know you're dying to go to Columbia, Hayes is there," and Hofstadter wrote an indignant letter back saying, "What kind of friends are you?" I eventually wrote an apologetic letter to Hofstadter about it. So that blew over. But that's as much of that story as I can tell.

Lage: Does that kind of thing, or did it, have any repercussions for you? Was there an historical establishment?

Stampp: Oh, there was an historical establishment. I don't know whether it ever had any impact on me. I once had an article--come to think of it, maybe it did. [laughs] I once had an article rejected by the *American Historical Review*, and Guy Stanton Ford, the editor, who was part of the establishment, was there. Whether that had anything to do with it, I don't know.

Lage: Was that early on?

Stampp: Well, it was when all this was going on. I don't know. As far as I know, it didn't.

Family and Publication during the War Years

Lage: Did the journals go on publishing? Did you have an outlet for your articles?

Stampp: All the journals kept on publishing during the war years. Yes, I had outlets.

I'm trying to think of anything else that I should mention. It was pointless to have a car in Washington. You couldn't get any gas. So I sold my car, and for three years we were without an automobile and depended entirely on public transportation. My trips to the Library of Congress were always on streetcars and bus, and my trips to the university were on buses.

Lage: And your wife's trips?

Stampp: Yes. There was shopping not far away, so she was able to shop, but it was not the most convenient thing you could imagine. I remember my son--let's see, he was three by 1945--thought that "damn bus" was one word. There was a bus stop right outside, and sometimes it was early, sometimes it was late. I used to say, "That damn bus, it's gone again," and he would say to me, "You missed that damnbus again?" [laughter]

Lage: A comment on public transit.

Stampp: Yes. I should get on to something personal. My wife was pregnant, and in April 1945, my daughter was born. So now I had two children.

Lage: And her name?

Stampp: Her name is Sara Katherine Stampp, and she's been Sally ever since. I guess her name on her driver's license is Sara K. Stampp, but she's always called Sally.

Lage: Okay, now we can get to your research.

Stampp: All right. The first thing I was concerned about when I got to Washington was to get my doctoral dissertation in publishable form. Well, maybe the first thing I did was to write two articles from my master's thesis, and they were both published in the *Journal of Negro History*.

I remember going down to the office of the editor of the *Journal of Negro History* which was on Ninth Street in Washington and talking to him about what I was doing. His name was Carter Woodson, and he was very interested. I sent one article in, I think it was called "The Fate of the Southern Antislavery Movement;" the other one was an analysis of a proslavery argument by Thomas Dew, who was a Virginia literary figure who wrote a long defense of slavery in 1832. So these were my first publications, these two articles in the *Journal of Negro History*.

Lage: Now, was the *Journal of Negro History* published by Negroes?

Stampp: Yes, it was sponsored by the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons], which was also in Washington at that time, and Carter Woodson was the editor of the journal. Dick Hofstadter also wrote an article, which had some influence on me, on [Ulrich Bonnell] Phillips, who was the historian of slavery. I think it was called "U.B. Phillips and the Plantation Legend," in which he criticized Phillips for writing mostly about very large plantations and not about the smaller ones, with other criticisms of Phillips' research methods.

Many people thought that was what got me interested in writing a book about slavery. To the best of my knowledge--I sound like Hillary Clinton, "to the best of my recollection"--it didn't have any effect, because at that time, I was not thinking about writing a book on slavery. I was thinking about writing a different book.

I also wrote two articles from my doctoral dissertation that were published in the *Indiana Magazine of History*. An article in the *North Carolina Historical Review* was also from my master's thesis, so I got three articles out of my master's thesis. Two articles from my doctoral thesis about Indiana were published in the *Indiana Magazine of History* and one in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*. I had six articles published, I think, by the time I left Maryland, three from my master's thesis and three from my doctoral dissertation.

Meanwhile, I was doing some cutting in my doctoral dissertation and some revising and some rewriting. I began negotiating with the Indiana Historical Bureau, which was then under the direction of a man named Coleman, and I sent him the manuscript. He was very interested in doing it, but I got a very discouraging letter--I think it was 1944--saying, "We've just got to curtail our publishing because of paper shortages." So that was in abeyance. I thought, well, after the war, I'll try again, and I did try again.

Research Project: Lincoln during the Secession Crisis

Stampp: Meanwhile, I had got interested in another problem.

In 1942, David [M.] Potter, who was then a young professor at Yale, wrote a book called *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861*. I read the book, and it didn't ring true to me. I wrote a review, a rather snotty review of it, and it was published in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*. I

didn't like the book, and I didn't think it was sufficiently researched either. I would never have written that review that way later on, but this was my first review, and it was nasty.

I didn't think that Potter was right, and I'll have to go into some detail about one particular thing. Potter concluded that the country stumbled into war because Lincoln didn't understand the depth of the secession movement, the seriousness of it; that he thought that all he had to do was just wait, be patient, and they'll come to their senses; that there was a lot of unionist sentiment in the South, and that the South would come back to the Union voluntarily. Some newspapers did argue, "Just be patient, the hotheads are in control in the South, but they'll cool off and come back." William H. Seward, who became Lincoln's secretary of state, advocated that very strongly, and Potter felt that this was what Lincoln's policy was, too.

I began reading Lincoln, and I couldn't see it. Moreover, Potter maintained that Lincoln had tried to avoid war, that he would not have sent his relief expedition to Fort Sumter if another relief expedition had been landed at Fort Pickens, which is near Pensacola, and that therefore, the expedition to Fort Sumter was a defeat for Lincoln's policy. It just didn't make sense. It was something that I became absolutely obsessed with for a while. I had to get this thing worked out in my own head.

Lage: When you first read it, though, was it just based on not making sense, or had you read a lot of Lincoln?

Stamp: It just didn't make sense to me, and so I began reading Lincoln's writings, then going into the Official Records of the Union and Confederate armies. Then I began doing research, and this was what I was doing Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at the Library of Congress. I began research first on an article. I wrote an article called "Lincoln and the Strategy of Defense in the Crisis of 1860-'61," which I submitted to the *American Historical Review*. It was rejected--

Lage: Aha, that's the one.

Stamp: --and whoever was the critic said, "It's anti-Lincoln," as if that was a reason for rejecting it. So I sent it to the *Journal of Southern History*, and they published it.

Lage: That's an interesting thought, that it was anti-Lincoln.

Stamp: Yes. I don't know who the critic was, but he said, "Incidentally, it's anti-Lincoln." Anyway, in this article, published in 1945, my position was that Lincoln, after he was elected president,

briefly thought that the South would cool off, but once South Carolina seceded, he didn't think that any more.

He saw the problem that he was going to face as president, that somehow he was going to have to unite the North if he had to resort to violence to preserve the Union. Lincoln was a nationalist, and he was not under any circumstances going to let the South secede in peace. He never acknowledged the right to secede. Fairly early, he understood that somehow, if there is violence, he must not appear to be the aggressor.

He left Springfield in early February of 1861, and he stopped in Indianapolis and Cincinnati and Cleveland and Pittsburgh and New York and Trenton, New Jersey, always making speeches about how we have to preserve the Union, but how he does not intend to be the aggressor, if there is violence.

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Stamp: I remember when he spoke in Trenton, New Jersey, he said to his audience, "It may be necessary to put the foot down firmly, and I assume you will support me," and he got applause. Before that, in Indianapolis, he said, "People are talking about aggression and defense and coercion of the Southern states. Who wants to coerce the Southern states? I don't want to coerce the Southern states. I don't want to march an army into the South and coerce them. But suppose I just defend federal property. Is that coercion? No. That's defense. I'm going to simply defend federal property. And supposing I see that federal laws are enforced. Is that coercion?"

In his famous first inaugural address, again he said that the union is perpetual, that there is no legal, constitutional way that a state can secede from the union, that he was going to use all the power at his command to defend and protect the property of the United States and enforce the laws; and the peroration at the end when he said, "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, is the issue of war or peace. I have no intention of coercing or intimidating you. I am merely going to enforce the laws." Then a rather sweet thing at the end, saying, "Think what you're doing before it goes too far, and the mystic bonds of memory will ultimately bring us back." It was lovely.

Lage: Pretty masterful, as you've described it.

Stamp: Absolutely beautiful.

So he came into office, and shortly after he was in office, a day or so afterwards, he heard that Major Anderson at Fort

Sumter in Charleston Harbor, which was one of the few pieces of property still in federal hands--the Confederates, the Southerners, had seized all federal property except Fort Sumter, Fort Pickens near Pensacola, and Forts Jefferson and Taylor off Key West. That was all that was left.

Lage: The only places he had to defend.

Stampp: All that was left to defend, yes. They had seized post offices, they had seized other forts, they had seized the United States Mint in New Orleans, and so on. Then he heard that Anderson was running out of supplies at Fort Sumter and that Anderson could hold out about six more weeks.

So he called his cabinet together and said, "What do you think I should do?" They were divided. Seward wanted him to abandon Fort Sumter. A couple of others wanted to, a couple of others didn't want him to. Then he asked General Scott, who was general-in-chief of the United States Army, "What should I do?" Scott, who was very much influenced by Seward, who wanted to abandon Fort Sumter, wrote to Lincoln and said, "We have no choice."

Major Anderson said it would take a huge armada and 20,000 well-disciplined troops. Well, there weren't that many troops in the army at that time. General Scott said, "You'd better abandon it," yet Lincoln couldn't do it. He mulled it over in his mind, and finally, his postmaster general brought a friend, a captain in the navy, named Gustavus Vasa Fox to talk to Lincoln. Fox told Lincoln that he had a plan, that he could take some naval ships down there and at night run in some very fast small boats, run supplies into Anderson. He thought he could succeed. Lincoln thought about it and said, "Go ahead."

The expedition was planned. On April 4th, Lincoln gave the final order to go ahead. It didn't go ahead until about the seventh. He had already given orders that reinforcements that were on shipboard near Fort Pickens should be landed, and he had heard on April 6th that these troops had not been landed because the order had come from the wrong man. I don't know whether it was the secretary of the army instead of the secretary of the navy or the secretary of war--anyway, they weren't landed. So he immediately sent another courier to Pickens saying, "Get those troops landed."

Well, Lincoln later on said in a message to Congress, "If those troops had been landed at Fort Pickens, I would never have sent a relief expedition to Fort Sumter." That was a lie.

Lage: Because he had already decided to.

Stampp: He had already decided. It was a lie. He had already written to Anderson saying the troops were coming. Actually, in his papers, there was the order dated April 4th, and I'm sure that later on he wrote a memo on it, "Written April 4 but not sent until April 6."

Lage: So this is what you found in your sources.

Stampp: That's what I found in my sources. So I had to check--how long did it take a letter to get from Washington to Fort Sumter? The mails were still going through at this time. No letter ever got to Fort Sumter in less than three days from Washington. If he had not sent that letter until April 6th, it couldn't have got there until April 9th. Well, it got there April 7th, and that was just right, because he wrote it April 4th, and April 7th is just exactly right.

Lage: So it sounds as if you were uncovering, by carefully looking at the sources, uncovering some new information.

Stampp: Yes, checking on dates and how long it took for letters to get from one place to another. So Lincoln sent the relief expedition, and very cleverly, I think, and very cautiously. This all sounds anti-Lincoln, but I didn't mean it to be anti-Lincoln. He gave advance warning to the governor of South Carolina that a relief expedition was coming, but he was going to land only supplies. He was going to feed a starving garrison, but no reinforcements and no military supplies would land.

Then he added one phrase which is, I think, quite provocative. He said, "Until further notice." [laughter] You see?

So Governor Pickens gets this notice. He notifies Jefferson Davis. Davis has a conference, and they give the order to the Confederates--General Beauregard in Charleston--to open fire. On April 12, 1861, they open fire, before Fox's expedition got there. The expedition was helpless, they couldn't do anything. The bombardment went on for thirty-six hours, and on April 13th, Anderson surrendered. The Confederates let the federal garrison board one of the ships, and they sailed back to New York.

Lincoln then called for 75,000 troops to suppress a domestic insurrection. Jefferson Davis called for 100,000 troops, and the war came.

That was my article. Then I decided to write a book about this, not just on the Sumter thing, but I'm going to write a book

on the way Northerners reacted to the secession crisis from the fall of 1860 until the outbreak of war in April, 1861. That was the research I was doing at the Library of Congress in 1943, '44, and '45. I hadn't quite finished the research--in '46.

Lage: How does writing about a war in the midst of another war that you have doubts about, and being a pacifist--did this affect how you looked at it?

Stampp: Well, it probably did have an effect. My feeling about the Civil War--as a historian, you have feelings about what you're writing about--my feeling about the war was that if the only issue had been the idea that this is a perpetual union, and no state can secede, if that was all it was worth, if that's all that was involved--600,000 lives you're going to lose for that cause? I thought under those circumstances, it wouldn't have been worth it.

If, however, it was to abolish slavery, that's something else. I had another argument with David Potter later on about this. We argued about this for years afterwards. He and I got to be good friends, and he forgave me for my review. I even said, "I'm sorry I wrote such a nasty review."

Lage: He reviewed your book also, did he not?

Stampp: Yes, he did, and it was a much gentler review than I wrote of his book. But he later on wrote an essay in which he said, "One may well ask whether the freeing of four million slaves was worth 600,000 lives," because slavery might have disappeared of its own, it might have collapsed, and so on. Then I wrote a reply saying, "Well, one may well ask how many more years four million human beings should remain in slavery." He estimated that there was one life lost for every six slaves freed--he had a statistical thing about how many lives in relation to how many slaves were freed. So this argument went on and on for years afterward.

IV UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY, 1946-1950s

An Offer from Berkeley

Stamp: In any case, I was a long way along in my research at the Library of Congress. I used many newspapers and lots of manuscript collections. Then in the spring of 1946, things began to happen. Hofstadter got an offer from Columbia, and I knew he was leaving. Mills got an offer from Columbia, and I knew he was leaving. And there I was--I wasn't going to get the job at Hopkins, and I wasn't going to get the job at Swarthmore. I thought, My God, I'm going to be here again. Freidel is fired, Hofstadter is leaving, Mills is leaving, and I'm going to be here again.

In April 1946 I went to a kind of rump meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in Bloomington, Indiana. John D. Hicks had been one of my professors at Wisconsin.

Lage: But you hadn't been that close to him, had you?

Stamp: Not terribly close to him, no. He was very much in favor of Roosevelt's foreign policy. He knew Hesselstine, and I was a Hesselstine student. John D. Hicks was at the Mississippi Valley meeting in Bloomington, Indiana. It was a small meeting, and I remember Hicks saying, "Let's have a drink together. You know, I'm an old Wisconsin--" he was out here [in Berkeley] now. He came out here in '42. So we sat and had a drink and talked about Wisconsin and about Hesselstine. And that was that.

The next month, early May of 1946, I got a letter from Hicks and a letter from Hesselstine offering me an instructorship out here.

Lage: And Hesselstine, you said?

Stamp: He had written to Hesselstine and said that he was interested in bringing me to Berkeley. I said, "Instructorship? I'm an

associate professor. I know it's only Maryland, but I'm not going to start over again." He wrote to Hesseltine and said, "Tell Stamp to accept it," an instructorship. I said, "No." I wrote back and said, "I'll step down one rank. I'll go back to assistant professor, but I'm not going to take an instructorship." Well, I think Hicks had sort of said, "That's all I can do." Ultimately it was changed.

Lage: Did it go back to assistant professorship?

Stamp: It was raised to an assistant professorship, and more than that, it was raised to a second-step assistant professorship. My salary at Maryland at that time was \$3,500, and going to Berkeley, my salary would be \$3,600. That wasn't much of an inducement. Well, it turned out when I got here that it was going to be \$3,900, and that helped a lot.

Lage: What did you think of Berkeley from back there on the East Coast?

Stamp: I didn't even know where Berkeley was. I had to find a map. I thought Berkeley was somewhere in southern California. I was that ignorant about the university. I found it was across from San Francisco. I had never been to San Francisco. I had been to Los Angeles but not San Francisco. I told Hofstadter about the job, and he said, "Well, surely you're not going to take it." I said, "Well, I'd like to get out of here, and I wouldn't mind going out there for a few years." He said, "Well, I must say, I don't think much of the history department at Berkeley."

Lage: I wonder what he would have known.

Stamp: About the history department?

Lage: Right.

Stamp: Well, he knew, for example, that the dominant figure for some years was Herbert Eugene Bolton and that Bolton didn't have any use for men who taught American history. You should teach history of the Americas.

Lage: So that was well known--

Stamp: As a matter of fact, until Hicks came here in 1942, there was no survey course in American history given in Berkeley. There was a course called the History of the Americas, which I always thought was kind of a bastard course--trying to teach the history of Argentina and Brazil and Canada and Mexico and the United States, all in one. They were different cultures to begin with, but this was Bolton, and the department was full of Bolton students.

Lage: That's right, especially in American history.

Stampp: Well, Lawrence Harper was an American historian who taught colonial history. Hicks came here in 1942 on condition that he introduce a survey course in American history, otherwise he wouldn't have come. There had been none up to then. Bolton students Jim King and Engel Sluiter taught History of the Americas. Bolton had done it before he retired. Bolton had been called back in to teach during the war and had just re-retired. Another one of his students, George Hammond, was the head of the Bancroft Library, and still another one of his students, Lawrence Kinnaird, was in the history department.

Lage: Of course, you probably didn't know this detail at the time.

Stampp: Well, I knew about Bolton, but I think Hofstadter knew a bit more about the setup than I did at that time. In any case, there were four Bolton students in the department: the head of the Bancroft Library, Lawrence Kinnaird, Engel Sluiter, Jim King, all committed to this History of the Americas thing. The other American historian at that time was a young assistant professor, Walton Bean.

So in American history, we had Hicks, who was really out of the department at that time; he was dean of the graduate division in 1946. Frederic Paxson had just retired, so he was out. Paxson had been here as an American historian, but he had agreed to let them have this History of the Americas and no course in American history. When I came, there was Larry Harper in colonial history, Walt Bean, who--

Lage: He was more in California history, wasn't he?

Stampp: Well, he was California history, but he was supposed to be teaching recent American history. He never really wanted to and never liked it, and he finally got to teach California history. There was Hicks, who was dean of the graduate division, and that was it in American history.

Lage: A different crowd from Richard Hofstadter and Frank Freidel.

Stampp: Oh, yes, indeed. Larry Harper was a pleasant person, and he was all in favor of advanced methods of research, but he never did anything as far as writing all the time he was here. Walt was an agreeable man, but he always gave me the impression that somehow life had already defeated him. He did write and publish a book called Boss Ruef's San Francisco, which is a good piece of work on a corrupt episode in San Francisco's history.

Migrating to the West Coast

Stamp: I came out. I told Hofstadter I would go out at least for a few years. I went to Madison that summer and taught in the summer session. My wife was with me. Then I managed to get a car. They were hard to get in 1946, but through an influential brother-in-law I got a car so I could drive out.

I went back East in August before I came out here. I went to Philadelphia and to New York and Boston, doing research on my *And the War Came*. I managed to finish the work that I needed to do in the Pennsylvania Historical Society library, the New York Public Library, the Harvard library, Massachusetts Historical Society library--that was several weeks of really hard work. I went back to Milwaukee where my wife was, and early in September, we started driving out to Berkeley with two children, aged one and four, and a son who got carsick.

Lage: Oh, dear.

Stamp: We went to Dodgeville, where my wife's parents lived, and stayed a night with them, then started driving. We got about twenty miles out of Madison and my son got carsick, and I had to stop the car and walk him up and down. We got across the Mississippi River and spent the night there, and I thought at this rate, we're going to get there in October. The next day, driving across Iowa--I don't know how many times my son got carsick--but I would have to stop the car, and we would go out and walk up and down. I don't know whether it even existed at that time, but there was--

Lage: Dramamine and the--

Stamp: Dramamine, I didn't know about Dramamine.

Lage: Yes, it probably didn't exist, unless they had invented it during the war.

Stamp: Well, I really don't know, but I didn't know about it. It took us all day to get 250 miles through Iowa, and it was very discouraging. Fortunately, by the third day, he was getting used to the driving, and the carsick problem ended.

Then we had a rather pleasant trip across the mountains. We got into California on the twelfth of September, I remember, and stopped up in the mountains. I loved the mountains, I wanted to stop in the mountains, so we stopped in the little village of Cisco, elevation of about 5,500 feet, and found a motel there. I must have told you this story about my son--

Lage: No.

Stampp: --embarrassing me. We went in the restaurant, and I decided I wanted to have a drink before dinner, and my wife didn't. They were sitting at their table; they should have stayed in the motel. My son would keep running into the bar and going back and saying, "He's still drinking." [laughter] I had one drink! One cocktail. And of course, when I walked into the dining room, everybody looked at this drunk person who was coming. [laughing]

Lage: Holding up this poor family!

Stampp: The next day, we drove on down--I must say, driving into the Bay Area then was something because there was no freeway. You had to drive through Roseville and every community on the way--Davis, and right through Richmond, and Rodeo and so on. I thought we would never get here.

I remember we finally came out on--I think there was an East Bay freeway then--the freeway the afternoon of September thirteenth, and I looked at San Francisco and the bay and the Golden Gate Bridge, and I fell in love with it, absolutely fell in love.

Lage: After that long trip.

Stampp: Yes. Then there was the problem--Hicks had urged me to come out alone because housing was terrible. We had no money to buy a house, absolutely not. I took my family with me, and we holed up in a motel in Richmond near the freeway and lived, the four of us, in a one-room motel for a month while I went house-hunting. There was simply nothing to rent.

Lage: Were you also starting to teach?

Stampp: I started to teach, and I had to go back to the one-room motel with a one-year-old and a four-year-old and my wife going crazy out there with them. Finally, George Mowry, a former student of Hicks, who was teaching at Mills, told me that he had heard about a woman who owned a little cottage on Acton Crescent--do you know where that is?

Lage: Yes [in northwest Berkeley].

Stampp: It runs off Acton Street. There was a little house there with one bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen, and a little bathroom with a shower, that she was willing to sell. Well, this was a phony sale. I never signed any papers, but the monthly payments were, I don't know, \$55 or something like that. Theoretically, I was

buying that house, but the reason she was selling it is that she wanted to find some way of getting out of rent control. These payments were more than the rent control board would have let her charge for that place.

We stayed there my first year, and she always said, "Oh, I must bring some papers around for you to sign," but she never did.

Lage: Did you think you were buying it, or did you know it was a ruse?

Stampp: I didn't know. I didn't know what was going on. I knew that this was a temporary thing. In February of 1947, my brother-in-law came out--my sister had made a very good marriage financially, a good marriage in many ways--on business, and he came over and spent a day with me and Kay. I had been looking at houses that might possibly be buyable. I had found one, 6 Ardmore Road in Kensington--you know where the Kensington shopping area is.

Lage: Yes.

Stampp: Ardmore Road runs right off there. Six Ardmore Road. It was up for sale for \$14,750, and it had two bedrooms and a finished attic where you could easily put up several beds, make a playroom. I could get it for a down payment of \$3,000, which I didn't have. Of course, we had some furniture. I talked to my brother-in-law. I said, "Can I borrow \$3,000 from you? I'll pay it back. I'll teach summer sessions, and I'll pay it back at the rate of \$500 a year, and pay interest of 6 percent." He agreed. So we paid down \$3,000 on the house. We took out a mortgage for--what was that--\$11,750. The payments were--

Lage: It probably seemed huge at the time.

Stampp: Oh, it was staggering. It was absolutely staggering. The thought of being that deep in debt just staggered me. Anyway, the payments were easy, about \$110 a month.

Then we found that under the existing laws about rentals, you had to give six months notice. A couple had been renting this house for five years. The house was owned by missionaries who had just come back and were living in retirement somewhere in the valley. So I had to serve papers on these people. It was a couple with no children. I had to serve it on both of them, and I was afraid they would dodge me, but I caught them.

Lage: To give them the six months notice?

Stampp: I had to give them the six months notice, and I had to present it to both of them, because if one got it and the other didn't, the other could stay.

Lage: It sounds like Berkeley had a history of rent control before we actually think of rent control.

Stampp: Oh, no, this was federal. This was the federal law at that time. So I served the papers, and they had really let this house run down. They had done nothing about the garden. The garden was an absolute jungle of weeds, and the house needed painting. We had to sit for six months--

Lage: In your one bedroom.

Stampp: --in the one bedroom, while these two people had two bedrooms. It just made me sick. But we lasted it out, and--I think it was August--we finally got them to move out.

Lage: August '47, would this be?

Stampp: August '47, and we moved into 6 Ardmore Road. That's where we lived for the next five years.

Meanwhile, classes were starting in Berkeley, and I was settled in. I was not given a private office. Ray Sontag, who was a European historian, was still on leave. He was in Washington during the war. He had a splendid office up in the fourth floor of the library, the old part of the library, a big office. However, I had to share it with Engel Sluiter and Walt Bean.

Lage: Oh, three of you.

Stampp: There were three of us. It was a good-sized office, and it worked all right. We were all quiet. We were all working hard. I had to do a few more bits of research in printed things I could find here before I could start writing *And the War Came*. Then I made a discovery that was very discouraging: this library had almost nothing in my field as far as primary research materials were concerned.

Lage: It sounds like they didn't have anybody teaching your field.

Stampp: There was no one teaching my field, that's right. There were no newspapers, there were hardly any microfilms. I discovered that the university actually owned a file of a Boston newspaper, I think it was the *Boston Advertiser*, and it was left in storage in

the East. One of the first things I did was to get them to bring that paper out. It's still here.

There were no manuscript--outside of California history, of course, lots of stuff, but that was not what was interesting me. I thought, "Well, if I'm going to have any graduate students, every one of them is going to have to go East to do research, because there's nothing here for them. And I'll have to go East for mine."

Lage: It wasn't as easy to go East then as it is now.

Stampp: It wasn't. When I did go East, it was on the City of San Francisco, which took thirty-nine hours from here to Chicago--two nights on the train--then you still had to go on to the East, to New York or Washington.

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Stampp: I thought that I really couldn't stay here very long. I had let people know in Madison that I probably would want to leave after a couple of years.

Lage: Did you make any effort to get the library up to speed?

Stampp: That came a bit later, when I had some bargaining power. I didn't at the beginning.

Settling into Teaching and Publishing

Stampp: So I began teaching a survey course in American history. I remember walking in to 101 Cal [California Hall]--I don't know whether you remember 101 Cal when it was a lecture hall, held about 400 students.

Lage: I do, yes. I remember it well.

Stampp: Do you? Okay. It was a nice lecture hall--you didn't realize the size of it from the podium because it was sort of like this [shaped like an amphitheater]. I had never lectured to more than thirty-five students, and I walked in there one Tuesday morning and found 400 students in there, and four teaching assistants whom I had not met yet. I still remember one of them asked whether I had my registration card with me. I looked kind of young then. [laughter] I had to tell them I was going to run this course.

Lage: [laughs] That's great.

Stampp: And--wow, that was an experience, I must say, lecturing to that many students. That was really nerve-shattering.

I also taught a course in the history of the Old South, Civil War and Reconstruction, my first year, and it was the first time I had a chance to do that. I did one year teach a course in the history of the South, my last year in Maryland. Gewehr used to teach it, and he gave it up to me.

Lage: Must have been nice to be hired to cover a field you were interested in.

Stampp: My own field, really, for the first time. I gave my course in the history of the Old South. I had about, oh, sixty or seventy students in it. It was a nice-sized group. I had a seminar--it must have had seven or eight students in it. That I liked very much.

Lage: What was the teaching load then? Four classes, or three?

Stampp: I lectured two hours each week in the survey course. I gave an upper-division lecture course, that's three hours, and then I gave a seminar. So it was two--five--seven hours of teaching. That was something too, after teaching twelve hours in Maryland, and having teaching assistants to teach the discussion sections, and having a reader for my upper-division course. That was real luxury.

Lage: So this was different, even though you had to lecture to 400.

Stampp: Yes. Well, that was different. It was quite an experience.

Stampp: I spent all my spare time writing *And the War Came*, and also I went East for conventions, took the train East. I got travel money, research money, to do that. I conferred with a new director of the Indiana Historical Bureau, I believe in 1947. I had sent him the revised dissertation manuscript, and he thought it was great, "We're going to publish it." That was wonderful. It came out in 1949, finally.

So I was hard at work on *And the War Came*. I finished that in 1948. I submitted the first couple of chapters to Alfred Knopf, and I remember a daughter of Samuel Eliot Morison was the editor at Knopf, Emily Morison. The manuscript came back to me in about two weeks, maybe less than two weeks. I was quite indignant; I didn't think they had taken much time looking at it.

Lage: And what were their comments?

Stampp: No, wait a minute. They sent the two chapters back and they didn't think they were interested in it--that was it. The man in American history who did a lot of traveling out here at that time was Roger Shugg, who later went to the University of Chicago Press--he worked for Knopf at that time. I was pretty indignant about the speed with which they made the decision on a couple of chapters I sent.

So apparently, Dick Hofstadter talked to Shugg and said, "Ken was pretty upset about this," and Roger wrote and said, "Well, look. Dick says you don't think we gave you much time, but when you finish the manuscript, send the whole thing and let us read the whole thing." So I finished it in 1948, and I sent it to Knopf, and they turned it down again, the whole thing. I said, "I'll never send another manuscript to Knopf, so help me."

Lage: Why Knopf? Why did you send it to Knopf to begin with?

Stampp: Knopf was then and still is one of the best publishers in American history. They do beautiful books. Alfred Knopf really cared about the format of a book. So I swore I would never send a book to them again. I sent it to LSU Press, Louisiana State University Press, and they loved it. They took it and published it in 1950, so that looked pretty good: a book out in 1949 and another book in 1950.

Lage: Made you look very enterprising.

Stampp: It had wonderful reviews. I didn't get a single critical review; it really was good. I found out later that it was second for the Pulitzer Prize. I found that out through the head of the LSU Press. Well, being second is like--

Lage: No one else knows. [laughter]

Stampp: That's right. But anyway, it did make me feel--.

Lage: Was there anyone at Berkeley that you had read your book, or were you sending chapters to anyone?

Stampp: I should talk about that, that's very important. Dick Hofstadter read it. He wasn't happy about the first couple of chapters. He wanted it to be a little jazzier at the beginning, and I didn't quite know how to do that. The first book I wrote on my own without anyone. Hesseltine read it, but he wasn't much of an editor.

My friend Dick Current had left the eastern shore of Maryland, and then he had gone to a series of jobs. He had one up in northern Michigan at a state college, and then he taught at Lawrence College in Appleton, Wisconsin. In about 1947, I think at the end of my first year--maybe '48--he got a job at Mills College. He was out here for four years--I think it was '48 to '52 that he was out here.

This was wonderful. We met frequently, our families met. He lived on the Mills campus, so we would go down there, and he would come up here, or we would meet halfway and then picnic. I gave Dick all my chapters. Now, Dick was a much better writer than I was--he majored in English and the classics as an undergrad--and I guess he was just naturally a good writer. He went through my chapters and did a lot of editing of them and told me about ways to improve the prose and so on. So I thanked him, I hope enough, in the preface. The book, as it turned out, was pretty well written--thanks partly at least to Dick Current--and very well received, very well reviewed.

By that time, I had decided I was going to write a book on slavery. I had finished *And the War Came* in '48, and people later asked me, "What made you decide to write a book on slavery?" I don't know the answer to it, except that from my radical days back in the 1930s, I had always been interested in race relations and saw prejudice in Maryland and in Washington, D.C. Did you know that blacks could not eat in restaurants in Washington at that time?

Lage: In Washington itself.

Stamp: The American Historical Association once met at the Mayflower Hotel in the 1950s, and the hotel had to make a special dispensation and let blacks come into the hotel and eat in the dining room and even sit in the bar. As soon as the AHA meeting came to an end, the old rules were back, and no black could sit in the bar in the Mayflower.

Lage: And everybody was aware of it.

Stamp: In Washington, yes. So all these things did get me interested, and of course my master's thesis was on the antislavery movement in the South. That at least got me involved in some of the material, the kinds of materials that I would have to use.

When I was teaching, the only book that I could give my students to read was U. B. Phillips' *American Negro Slavery, or Life and Labor in the Old South*.

Lage: That would be an impetus right there.

Stamp: Yes. Well, my lectures were really a refutation of U. B. Phillips. That was kind of easy to do.

I had a student who was out here for just one year, Richard Heffner, who got his B.A. and M.A. at Columbia. He was my teaching assistant in 1947-48. He was not actually in my seminar. I had been saying in my seminar, "Somebody has got to write a new book about slavery. This just won't do." U. B. Phillips was published in 1918 or '19. To the best of my recollection, it was Dick Heffner who said, "Well, why don't you write it?" As far as I know, that's the first time I had considered it.

Lage: So the light bulb went off.

Stamp: I'll tell you one reason why I hesitated. I thought a Southerner had to do it. Southern history at that time was still being written by Southerners. I can't think of any book on the South that had not been written by a Southerner, with two exceptions. Herbert Aptheker wrote a book called *American Negro Slave Revolts*, and it was published by the Communist party press--I can't remember the name of it; and Frederick Bancroft wrote a book on slave trading in the old South, and he was a Northerner. Every study on slavery that I knew of at that time was written by a Southerner. I knew that Southerners were still feeling very sensitive about this, and I thought it really ought to be a Southerner who wrote it.

Lage: For acceptance purposes.

Stamp: For acceptance purpose, yes. Anyway, I finally decided, I'm going to try it. So I began shortly after finishing *And the War Came* to do research on it, from what I could do here.

An Offer from the University of Illinois

Stamp: In 1949, my friends at Wisconsin--Fred Harrington, incidentally, had left Arkansas and gone back to Wisconsin and was a professor there; my professor was still there, Hesseltine--heard of a job at the University of Illinois. James G. Randall, who was a Lincoln biographer and one of the major figures in the Civil War period, was retiring, and I guess my professors at Madison practically guaranteed that I would take the job because they knew that I wanted to leave here.

So Illinois wrote to me, and I wrote and said, "Yes, I am interested," and they offered me the job. They offered me an associate professorship at--oh, something over \$5,000. It was more than I was getting here.

I told Hicks, who was back in the department by then, that I was seriously thinking about taking it. I wrote a letter of acceptance, as a matter of fact--you sent things air mail then--an air mail letter in which I accepted the job. Before I mailed it, I had a phone call from Robert Gordon Sproul, the president, and he asked me to come in and talk to him. I did, and he offered to match the offer. He offered me an immediate promotion to associate professor, top-ranked associate professor. However, there was a sort of tradition in this department that everyone had his turn about being promoted.

Lage: So that had been part of your dissatisfaction.

Stampp: I said to Sproul, "Well, I'm getting a big jump from a third-step assistant professor to a top-step associate professor, which means in two years, in 1951, I will be eligible to be considered for promotion to full professor, and I want to be considered. You may find that I'm not worthy of it, but I don't want two years from now to be told, 'Well, you were given that big jump; therefore, you can't be promoted now.'" He agreed that two years hence, '51, I would be considered for promotion.

Then he said, "I understand that you don't have adequate research materials out here," and I said, "No, I don't." He said, "Well, we can do something." These were the flush times in Berkeley. He said, "I'll see to it that there is a provision in the library budget for--" I don't know how long into the future, "--\$10,000 a year for you to buy materials." That sounded pretty good. I spent a lot of time the next few years finding newspapers that could be either purchased or microfilmed here, and manuscript collections that had been microfilmed, and I did build up a pretty good collection here.

I decided then I would stay, so I had to tear up my letter and say I was going to stay. I liked it here pretty much anyway. My professors at Wisconsin were pretty upset, though, about it. They said, "We told them, we almost guaranteed that you would come." [laughter] So that really was in a way a decision that I was going to stay here the rest of my life.

Lage: Did you see it that way at the time, do you think?

Stampp: I think so. I really did like it.

Lage: You liked the area.

Stampp: I liked the area. I love the whole Bay Area. I love San Francisco; I thought it was a wonderful thing to have that city right across the bay. I like Berkeley, and Telegraph Avenue was a nice street, a nice Bohemian street at that time, I thought. And I liked the university.

Things were looking up in the liberal arts in general by '49. I remember Merle Curti was offered a job out here in 1948, and he asked me whether he should take it. I said, "Well, that's up to you, but if I were you, I'd stay at Wisconsin," and he did. I think he was going to anyway.

Lage: But things were changing in those years.

Stampp: Yes. Things were beginning to change.

Lage: I think we should save that, because we really want to look at how things changed.

Stampp: Yes. I had made my decision really to stay here, and I had two books finished and ready to be published, and I was--

Lage: And you had learned how to lecture to 400 people.

Stampp: I had learned how to lecture to 400 people, and I was not too bad at it, I was pretty good. As a matter of fact, Hicks had heard that my lectures were very good, and my enrollment in my upper-division course had grown from about fifty or sixty students the first time to 200 or 300 students.

Lage: So you lost that smaller--

Stampp: I lost that small group there. Hicks once asked me whether I had preachers in my family or something. [laughter]

Lage: That must have given you mixed emotions!

Stampp: Well, it did, as a matter of fact.

A Break with Hesselstine

[Interview 5: May 14, 1996] ##

Lage: Today is May 14, 1996, and this is our fifth interview.

- Stamp: You asked me about Hesseltine giving a lecture in uniform: that never happened, to the best of my--
- Lage: You don't remember? That was an incident Leon Litwack mentioned to me.
- Stamp: No, I don't remember that it ever happened. Leon certainly wouldn't know about it, because if that had happened, it would have been in 1945.
- Lage: I think it was something you had told him.
- Stamp: I may have told him about my shock at his going or agreeing to go to Shrivenham and wear a uniform--
- Lage: That probably was it.
- Stamp: When he was teaching G.I.'s at Shrivenham, England, he would have been in a uniform. I never saw him.
- Lage: I see. Well, I could have misinterpreted that. Was Hesseltine in the military then?
- Stamp: No. He had to wear a military uniform. There were several professors from the University of Wisconsin who went to Shrivenham and probably elsewhere. It just happened that the head of my history department at Maryland, Wesley Gewehr, was--I can't remember why--he was responsible for finding some historians who would go and lecture at Shrivenham, and I mentioned my professor, thinking he would never go. To my astonishment, Gewehr said, "Yes, he's going." He went alone; his wife stayed back here, and he had to put on a uniform, I know that, and lecture to G.I.'s. It was the same sort of thing that I was doing at Maryland.
- Lage: But not in uniform.
- Stamp: Not in uniform--definitely not in uniform--but over there, I guess he had to put on a uniform.
- Lage: Did you ever talk to him about it?
- Stamp: I think I kept my surprise to myself. I was still too close to having been a student of his.
- Lage: How does that student-teacher relationship change over the years?
- Stamp: In this case?
- Lage: Yes, in this case.

Stamp: Every professor is different. My policy was when my Ph.D.'s get their degrees, we're on a first-name basis, and that teacher-student relationship was over. I never would have felt comfortable calling Hesselstine by his first name, and never did, nor did any of his other students.

When I wrote to him, I called him, "Dear W. B. H.," and when I spoke to him--you know, I think I avoided calling him anything. I thought when I got to be in my forties--it was kind of ridiculous for me to keep on calling him "Professor Hesselstine," but he never asked any of his students to call him by his first name.

Lage: So the feeling was obviously projected, that you shouldn't do it.

Stamp: Yes.

Lage: Things were more formal then.

Stamp: Well, I called John Hicks, who was ten years older than Hesselstine, I always called him John out here. And even when I met him before I came out here, I was on a first-name basis with him. For some reason, Hesselstine apparently didn't encourage it.

Lage: Do you know if his approach to history changed after the war? Did he continue--

Stamp: I don't know much about that. I doubt it very much. He was a rather bitter man after the war. For some reason, he was sort of paranoid about this--that because of his views on politics, people were against him. His aspiration at Wisconsin was to be chairman of the department. But if he had become chairman of the department, he would have been impossible. It's too bad when someone doesn't realize what he can do and what he can't do. He was always wanting a big offer from somewhere, and he wanted to come out here.

I'll tell you something that I have no written evidence for except one conversation with Hicks. Hicks and Hesselstine were very good friends at Wisconsin, even though they disagreed--never violently--but disagreed totally in their attitude toward Roosevelt's foreign policy, and about our involvement in the war. They were still very good friends, but when Hicks came out here in 1942, I think Hesselstine was hoping that Hicks could bring him out, with a chair.

And I remember one time--this is my suspicion: because of Hesselstine's political views, Hicks just didn't think he ought to

bring him out here. I suspect that there may have been some connection between that feeling on Hicks' part and my coming here.

Lage: That's interesting.

Stampp: Because not long after I came, a chair opened, and Hicks said something to me to the effect that, "Well, it would be nice to have Bill Hesseltine, but we have you now."

Then some years later--this was almost incredible--a job opened at the University of Oregon. I can't remember whether I was actually offered the job, but I was sort of being asked to come up and consider it. At that time, Hesseltine knew that I still had a very sentimental attachment to Wisconsin and that probably the one place that might tempt me to leave California was Wisconsin.

So he had--I have the letter still--an incredible scheme, that I should take the Oregon job, help him get the California job; then I would turn down the Oregon job and go to Wisconsin in his place. Well, I was not going to do anything of the sort. It didn't strike me as--

Lage: Sounds pretty iffy in there. You could be left--

Stampp: Yes, I could suddenly find myself at Oregon, where I did not want to be, and I doubt very much that Hesseltine would have got the job here anyway. So it was an incredible thing, and I would not have anything to do with it.

My relations with Hesseltine became very bitter.

Lage: In later years?

Stampp: In later years. Shall I talk about it now?

Lage: I think as long as we're on the topic, why don't we talk about it?

Stampp: I think that Hesseltine--I don't know how to put this--I think that he was very disappointed that he didn't get a chair out here. I think he was resentful of my being here.

Lage: Resentful of your success?

Stampp: Yes, that I got promotion to tenure. In 1951, I was promoted to full professor, I think it was '51, and as he saw it, he was stuck at Wisconsin. Frank Freidel was at Stanford by then, and I was here, and Dick Current was at Illinois.

Then I applied for a Guggenheim fellowship to do research on my slavery book, I asked Hesselstine to write a letter for me. Well, he wrote two letters. One he didn't send--he sent to me-- and the other he sent to the Guggenheim, which said "he's a fine young scholar." The one he sent to me said, "Well, Professor Stamp's been taken over by the anthropologists and the sociologists, and he's full of just bananas, and if this is the kind of stuff that interests you," and so on, "take him."

Lage: Oh, my goodness! That must have been hard to take.

Stamp: Well, you see, it was half humor and half serious. Hesselstine was always very narrow as far as his conception of good history was concerned, and writing history. He always called social and intellectual history "social and inconsequential history." He had no use for sociologists, anthropologists, and all of these people, and any historian who got taken in was--

Lage: All the things that were coming into history at that time.

Stamp: Yes. I guess in a way, he became more southern as he grew older. There was a streak of anti-Semitism in him that I found very disagreeable, which probably grew out of the war and the tendency of American Jews to support the war with considerable enthusiasm.

Then my slavery book was published, and most professors don't ever review books of their own students. It's just like incest. I have never reviewed a book of a student of mine. Hesselstine reviewed my book in the *Milwaukee Journal*, my hometown newspaper, and it was a nasty review, a really nasty review.

Lage: What objections did he have?

Stamp: Oh, he said the time may have come for a new and objective study of slavery. "Professor Stamp has not written that book. This book is full of his prejudices--" these aren't the exact words, but something of that sort. Then at the very end, there was a nasty remark. He said, "The book is neatly geared to attract the Pulitzer prize committee." Well, it didn't win a Pulitzer prize. It didn't win any prize, in fact, until many, many years later.

After that, I was pretty fed up with him. We had almost no contact after 1957.

Lage: That's kind of sad.

Stamp: Yes, it is sad.

Lage: He does sound like a bitter individual.

Stampp: Yes. He was very bitter in those last years.

Lage: Even the way he didn't support you for a fellowship when you were in your Ph.D. years.

Stampp: Oh, yes. So it was an up-and-down relationship I always had with him. Hesselstine didn't turn out to be a major scholar. He wrote quite a lot, and the books got less and less consequential instead of more and more consequential as he got older.

There was always a very cynical streak in him that I found exciting and provocative when I was a graduate student, but I found it getting a bit tedious afterward. He was very cynical about abolitionists and tried to find sordid motives for their abolitionism.

Lage: Is this his southernism coming out, do you think?

Stampp: Well, to some extent. I always thought of him as a very liberal man on race issues, but you know, in the later years he began referring to Negroes as "niggers." The worst thing I ever heard him do was at a party at his house. I wasn't there, but I heard about it from some of his students out there. He had a black graduate student. He got up on a chair and pretended he was auctioning him off.

Lage: Oh! Would this have been in the sixties?

Stampp: No, it was in the fifties, as I recall. All in all, he turned out in his later years to have lost a lot of the charm he had in the past.

Lage: Well, that's finishing that story up.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: I'm glad Hicks didn't bring him out.

Stampp: Well, if he had come, I would have left, and that didn't happen.

Moving Away from Beardian Economic Determinism

Lage: Well, I'm glad we got onto that. I looked at the preface to the new edition of *And the War Came*. I think it's so interesting that you've had this chance to look back on your books. This was in 1970.

Stampp: Yes, the paperback edition.

Lage: In that preface, you reflect on some of the things you would have done differently, and remark that Beardian economic determinism was inadequate.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: When did you really--and how--did you reject the Beardian approach, or was it over a long period of time?

Stampp: It was something that changed gradually. As Marxism seemed to be a less satisfactory way of interpreting history, so did economic determinism. I remember very clearly still saying some time in 1950 or '51 in the history office that, "In my opinion, Charles A. Beard is the greatest American historian of the twentieth century."

Lage: So this change would have been after 1950.

Stampp: This was after 1950, yes. I suppose it would have been partly the emergence of intellectual history in American historical studies that caused me to rethink some of my positions.

Lage: That's another thing you mentioned in the preface, that you would have paid more attention to the ideologies of the time.

Stampp: That's right, that book--you're reminding me now--that book was rather skeptical of the ideological reasons for northerners being willing ultimately to use force, military force, to suppress the Confederacy. I tended to emphasize economic motivation, the fear that there would be a tremendous amount of smuggling up the Mississippi River, and over this long, unguarded frontier merchants would lose their western markets. There were strategic considerations about who was going to control the Caribbean, who was going to control the western territories.

I think I remember saying that if I had to rewrite that part, there would be much more emphasis on ideological motivations, and I would take them much more seriously.

But I just can't give you a time when this happened. It was something that happened gradually.

I remember finally--this must have been the fall of 1960--several American historians: Carl Bridenbaugh, Hunter Dupree, Charles Sellers, Henry May and I--I think it was those five--would meet periodically at one house or another, and one of us would present a paper.

Henry May, who had long before I did rejected economic determinism, had been sort of a Marxist back in the thirties, too. I remember reading a paper--I'm sorry, I can't remember what the paper was on--in which I expressed skepticism about a pure economic interpretation of something. And to my astonishment, Henry May suddenly switched sides and was seeing more merit in the economic interpretation.

Lage: Henry May, the intellectual historian.

Stamp: That's right. I remember also saying, when I finished and heard Henry make this comment, "Henry, I knew when I presented this paper that you would suddenly switch to the other side."
[laughter]

Lage: But was it just for the sake of argument?

Stamp: Well, I think we were all playing around with interpretations, and Henry at this point, since I was more or less taking the position he might ordinarily have taken, suddenly decided to switch sides.

Lage: So have the two of you over the years had a lot of good discussions, shall we say?

Stamp: Oh, Henry and I had lots of good discussions. Have I not talked to you about this before?

Lage: No.

Stamp: Henry and I had a sort of up-and-down relationship. We were very close in age. I always had great admiration for Henry as a thinker and as an historian. I think he's absolutely first rate. I got a chair in 1957, and when I got it, I thought about Henry. I thought, there's no reason, other than something I deplore--and that is seniority--that he didn't get it. I remember driving home with Henry one time, and I said, "Henry, you deserved the chair as much as I did." I think that's all I said.

We had differences on the FSM movement in 1964-'65. There were times when I didn't see much of Henry. But as we got older, these differences became less and less, and now he's a very good and valued friend. We're no longer in the department, except as emeriti. But we meet for lunch about once every other week, and by and large, we agree on most things. We have some differences now and then.

Lage: It wouldn't be any fun if you had no differences.

Stamp: Oh, of course not. [laughter] Henry is a little less steady--I hope Henry never hears this--a little less steady. Henry tends to go up and down.

Lage: In his views, you mean?

Stamp: In his views--talking about contemporary politics. One week, Henry was disgusted with Bill Clinton, and I said, "Well, who are you going to vote for?" He said, "Well, I guess I'll have to vote for him."

I tend to be, I think, a little more steady and persistent in my political views and make allowances for what is possible than he does. But by and large, we get on extremely well. Henry and Jean were awfully good friends in times of trouble. My wife had lots of trouble in the last six years of her life, and Henry and Jean were wonderful, especially since she died in March.

Lage: Yes. That becomes much more important than slight political differences, doesn't it? As you get older, especially.

Stamp: Yes.

Loyalty Oath at Berkeley

Lage: Well, we'll probably talk more about that when we get to the sixties. Shall we go back to the early years here in the department?

Stamp: All right. Now, I don't remember where we left off.

Lage: Well, we got you here, we got you hired. You gave some initial impressions of coming out and impressions of the area, and of the department, starting to teach--

Stamp: Oh, big courses, yes.

Lage: Right, and the two books published, and then Sproul's effort to keep you, and that's where we stopped.

Stamp: With Sproul, yes.

Lage: And giving you the money to build up the research collection.

Stamp: Yes, giving me a promotion and a salary increase, and also money to build up the resources of the library.

Lage: Then you knew that you would be here for some time at that point.

Stampp: Okay, well, that really takes us up to 1949.

Lage: Right, unless there's more--perhaps more about the old-timers in the department, and how the department was run. I don't know if that will come out as you talk about the Loyalty Oath, or do you want to particularly think about that?

Stampp: I'm trying to remember. In '49, I turned down the job at Illinois, and that summer, I taught at Wisconsin for the third time, the summer school. I taught there in '45, '46, '49, '52. I was feeling pretty good about Berkeley and about my new position as associate professor, and feeling a little less economically strapped than I had been. I guess this is where the oath begins.

Lage: Okay.

Personal Politics Postwar

Stampp: That, of course, involves reaction to politics at the time, and maybe I had better talk about that, because by '49, the Cold War had begun, the House Un-American Activities Committee was everywhere. The city of Berkeley was under a very conservative council at that time. There were some pretty right-wing people on it. The Berkeley police were sort of helping identify radicals on the campus. The atmosphere was, in that sense, very unpleasant--but not just in Berkeley; that was everywhere in the country. [Joseph] McCarthy was in the United States Senate, and by '50, at least, I think probably '49, he was sounding off. Richard Nixon was doing his dirty work.

Lage: The Alger Hiss conviction was in '50.

Stampp: The Alger Hiss thing came up, and--oh, my, how I did hope that Alger Hiss was innocent. I guess he wasn't.

Lage: It seems in retrospect that he wasn't.

Stampp: It seems in retrospect that he wasn't, and that made me feel very sad--the fact that this creepy character from *Time* magazine should expose him.

Lage: Whittaker Chambers.

Stampp: Whittaker Chambers, yes. That was an awful shock.

Lage: At the time, did you feel he was innocent?

Stamp: I just hoped he was. I just hoped he was innocent. He was somebody that I admired. Of course, he was just red meat for Richard Nixon. Nixon was elected first in 1946 in a foul campaign against a very good liberal Democratic congressman in southern California, so he was in the house. I think it was 1950 when he ran against Helen Gahagan Douglas calling her the Pink Lady, and either directly or indirectly, making scurrilous charges against her, and he won. So things looked as though they were just politically going to hell at that point.

Lage: And how had your politics evolved after the war?

Stamp: Well, I didn't like the Cold War, and my tendency was to blame the United States and the Russians about equally. I was delighted when Harry Truman was elected in 1948, but I didn't vote for him. This is when my friend Richard Current was at Mills College, and we had endless discussions about American foreign policy and national politics. We were always very, very close in our thinking about it.

In 1948, Dick Current and I argued about whom we were going to support as if the future of the country, if not the world, depended on our two votes. We started off supporting Henry Wallace, and during the summer of '48, we were both Wallace-ites. Because our position was really "a plague on both your houses"--we didn't like American foreign policy, and we didn't like Russian foreign policy--we thought that Henry Wallace was getting too close to the Communists, that he was laying all the blame on American foreign policy, and that didn't strike us as fair.

So in the end, we decided to vote for the Socialist Workers' party candidate for president, Farrell Dobbs, because he was the one candidate who was saying, "A plague on both your houses--you're both imperialists."

Lage: So the Socialist Workers' Party didn't have a connection to the Communists?

Stamp: Well, that was a Trotskyist party--it was one branch of the Trotskyist movement; there were always two branches. They fought each other as if--

Lage: [laughs] As if the future depended on it.

Stamp: --as if the future depended on it. I also remember a story about one group of Trotskyists, the Canonists, and another group--I can't remember the name. One group was always heckling the other

when they had a meeting in New York. I remember one group, let's say it was the Canonists, attending a meeting of the other group, and the man on the platform saying to the hecklers down below, "All right, we'll take power without you." [laughter] Which was really a long way from reality.

So we voted for Farrell Dobbs, but I remember sitting up hoping that Truman would beat Dewey that year.

Lage: Of course, this same kind of decision occurred in the sixties.

Stampp: Yes, and when Roosevelt ran against Landon in 1936.

Lage: I'm thinking of the Goldwater election--whether to vote Democrat, Republican--the same kind of arguments went on in the next generation: did it make a difference?

Stampp: Oh, well, there was no doubt in my mind about that.

Lage: But in this earlier stage in your life, maybe that was a similar decision, and you decided to vote for the throwaway vote, in a way.

Stampp: Yes. That was 1948. By 1952, I had changed. I think 1944 was the last time I voted for the socialist candidate.

By 1952, because I think of the threat of McCarthyism, and because I found that Nixon was on Eisenhower's ticket, I got very enthusiastic about Adlai Stevenson. It was the first time I really got emotionally involved in a presidential election, because it was the first time in my life that I had ever thought the man I was supporting would win, or had a chance to win, anyway.

The Oath and Colleagues in History

Stampp: Maybe I had better not go into that right now. Let's back up to 1949. The summer of 1949, I was teaching at the University of Wisconsin, the summer session, and I received my reappointment letter from Berkeley.

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Stampp: At that time, at Berkeley, you used to get a letter reappointing you every year. This doesn't happen any more. It was kind of

silly. You had a tenure system, but you got the letter anyway. This time it also imposed a Loyalty Oath.

Lage: And you hadn't heard about this?

Stampp: I hadn't heard anything about it. I didn't know what it was about until I got back, and then found out that this had been a bad idea of Robert Gordon Sproul, with a good motive--that is, "Let's take the heat off the university by having the faculty sign a loyalty oath." I can't even remember exactly what the first one said, but it certainly made it impossible for a Communist to sign it.

I took the oath, but I didn't sign it then. I took it back with me to Berkeley that fall, and it had become a hot issue. I battled with myself and finally signed the oath, I think for purely personal reasons. I had two small kids, and I just didn't want to get fired. So I signed it.

Lage: Did you discuss it with people in the department?

Stampp: Oh, heavens yes.

Lage: There was only one nonsigner in the history department.

Stampp: In the history department, there was one nonsigner. A lot of--well, one other man, Gordon Griffiths, who was the son of a member of the board of regents as a matter of fact [Farnham P. Griffiths, regent, 1948-1951], refused for a long time to sign, but eventually he did sign.

Griffiths didn't stay very long. He wasn't promoted to tenure, and I can go into that a bit later. Griffiths was a Berkeley Ph.D., I think he worked with Frank Palm. The one nonsigner was Ernst Kantorowicz, who was a refugee from the Nazis, and I think he was not married. He had no family responsibilities. I am not going to put it in those terms, but it happened to be true. He left here and landed on his feet; he got an appointment at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, so never came back.

Lage: He was very well regarded, was he not?

Stampp: Very highly regarded as a scholar, a European historian.

There were a number of members of the history department who were indifferent to the whole thing. There were some who really supported it, and one who did was Raymond J. Sontag. Among those who didn't like it was John D. Hicks but who nevertheless didn't really want us all to make a big issue of it.

Lage: Well, he was a key figure.

Stampp: He was a key figure in trying to reach a compromise in 1950, and it didn't work. Some time in 1950, as I remember, the firing began, and there were twenty-four, twenty-five, something like that, who had not signed. There grew up--and I was very active in this--an interdepartmental organization to support the nonsigners, but I can't remember the name of it.

Lage: With financial assistance?

Stampp: Yes. I remember that Reinhard Bendix [associate professor of sociology] was in it, and--

Lage: Milton Chernin?

Stampp: --Milt Chernin, yes. I couldn't possibly remember all the names. I just happen to remember Reinhard Bendix was one of them. We decided to organize to raise money to pay the salaries of the nonsigners, and I was appointed or designated as the person to collect money from members of the history department. I don't know whether I should tell you who contributed and who didn't. You can imagine that Ray Sontag didn't, because he supported the oath. John Hicks did contribute. There are several people that I thought would. By and large, the old guard didn't.

Lage: The Bolton students?

Stampp: The Bolton students--no, wait, that's not so. No, Jim King and Engel Sluiter did. I can't remember what George Hammond did, but Kerner, Palm, Van Nostrand, and Sontag did not. Among the younger people, Armin Rappaport didn't contribute, but the rest, as I recall--Walt Bean, Engel Sluiter, Jim King, Carl Bridenbaugh, John Hicks, Paul Schaeffer, George Guttridge, Lawrence Harper--all contributed, and I had to collect every month. Everyone decided what he could afford to do. Then I turned the money over to the central committee, and the money went to the nonsigners.

Lage: Until they got other jobs?

Stampp: Until they got other jobs or until they came back. Some of them didn't take other jobs.

At some point, and I'm not sure whether it was 1951--this thing went on until 1952--it appeared that the regents were about to give in on this, and the faculty was double-crossed. I was so furious that I wrote to Sproul and withdrew my oath signature. I got a phone call from Sproul urging me not to withdraw, but it was an empty gesture on my part. I can't remember--it's a long time

ago now--exactly what happened. We thought there was going to be a settlement, an acceptable settlement.

Lage: After all that time.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: But finally it was settled in a court case.

Stampp: That's right, that's the way it was finally settled, but we never reached an agreement with the regents. They changed the oath so that everyone had to swear that they had no commitments that interfered with the free pursuit of truth. What a stupid thing, as if anybody had no commitments that didn't in some way--. I remember going up to [University of California] Davis in 1950 with Ray Sontag. Sproul had an annual conference in the spring up at Davis, and he would invite people from the university--that year, 1950, I was invited to come. Sontag was there also. I think he and I were the only two from the history department. For some reason, Sontag and I--well, I can think of several reasons--never got very close.

Anyway, there was a lot of wine served, and I think there was some hard liquor before. Sontag and I both had a fair amount to drink. Sontag suddenly came up and said, "Let's sit down at dinner together." We had a very candid discussion, I guess the only one we ever had in our whole relationship, about this oath. He said, "Why can't you sign an oath like that?" I said, "You, Ray Sontag, you're a devout Catholic. Do you mean you can sign that oath and say you have no commitments that interfere with the free pursuit of truth?" I can't recall what he said in reply, but to say you have no commitments--everyone who signed it was a hypocrite, for heaven's sakes.

Lage: The compromise that Hicks and others were trying to effect--didn't it break down over the issue of whether Communists should be employed? It seems so, from reading David Gardner's book.

Stampp: You know, I haven't gone back and looked over this, but I know that Hicks was on a committee with somebody in the economics department who was the chairman of it and worked terribly hard. I think it was Malcolm Davidson. I think his health broke down over this, I think he had a heart seizure just from the strain of it.

Lage: The economist, or Hicks?

Stampp: No, not Hicks, the economist. I don't think Hicks ever got passionate enough to have a heart seizure. [laughter]

Lage: But that isn't what stands out in your mind, that one of the key issues that prevented compromise was that the regents wanted to be sure that--just the fact of being a Communist meant you couldn't be a faculty member.

Stampp: That's right.

Lage: And others were willing to accept--?

Stampp: Well, I wouldn't accept that. And I didn't want to have to swear that I wasn't a Communist either.

Lage: Did you have fears at this time--was it that scary, the fact that you had been to meetings?

Stampp: Well, perhaps I was naive. I was certainly an outspoken opponent of the oath, even though I signed it, an outspoken supporter of the nonsigners, and an outspoken opponent of any kind of rule that members of some political group cannot be a member of the faculty. I didn't ever really think I was going to be fired, I don't know why. I had never joined the Communist party, so I really didn't have any reason to fear for my security.

Lage: But at that time, with the committees doing their investigations, there was so much guilt by association.

Stampp: Yes, that's right. And by that time, there was an organization on the Berkeley campus called--well, I can't say on the campus, because they could never meet on the campus those years, no political meetings on the campus--but there was an organization of Students Against McCarthy. There's no question that a lot of the students in the group were either Communists or fellow travelers. I for a long time always thought of myself as one of the fellow travelers.

It must have been at the YMCA across the street, I can't think of where--I know it wasn't on campus. Some of the students asked me whether I would speak. I did, I said I would, and I knew that the leader of the Communists from San Francisco was there sitting at the table, and I also knew that there were spies from the Berkeley police there and probably FBI people there.

But I wasn't afraid. It may have been naivete, but I thought of course I'll speak. My speech was against all forms of bigotry, not only the Un-American Activities form but bigotry within radical movements, intolerance within radical movements--so in a way, I was saying, "We all had better watch our bigotry." I didn't worry about that terribly much.

So the oath controversy was finally settled in '53, was it? Or '52. I really can't remember.

Aftermath

Lage: Did it leave fissures in the department?

Stamp: It left a lot of bitterness. I mean, it really damaged morale on the campus. But just remember, Berkeley was not the only place. It was happening at the University of Washington, it was happening all over the country. It was a kind of reign of terror, this McCarthyism.

It seems to me that, as I recall, the regents left the university alone pretty much. Sproul weathered it. Sproul quickly, as you know, realized that he had made a mistake, and he switched. He had a battle with the regents. He had Earl Warren on his side, which was wonderful. He had the *San Francisco Chronicle* on his side, as well.

Lage: But I think it was the only paper in the state--

Stamp: Well, not the *Los Angeles Times*, no, but the *Chronicle*. Possibly the *Sacramento Bee* also was on the faculty's side. Our public critics usually asked, "Well, if you're not a Communist, why don't you say you're not a Communist? Why do you object to signing an oath?" One of the objections was that it was a special oath for the faculty, that other state employees didn't have to sign--and that's where the faculty got into trouble, because ultimately, the advocates of an oath said, "Okay, we'll have everybody sign it, including the faculty, if that's all you're objecting to."

Lage: So we end up signing the same thing that the state employees sign.

Stamp: So all state employees, including the faculty of the universities and state colleges had to sign an oath. That was a very weak argument on our part, that it was simply a special oath and therefore we objected to it. It was not because it was a special oath; it was because it was an oath, whether it was a special oath for faculty or not.

I can't think of anything more to say about that, except that there was a lot of bitterness afterwards. In the department, one knew who was for and who was against.

Lage: Did it affect the future of the department?

Stamp: Well, Kantorowicz never came back. I think those who supported the nonsigners usually knew who was not supporting the nonsigners, and it took a long time for that to be forgotten.

Let me finish the story of Gordon Griffiths. He was here by 1949, he might have come in '48. He was a good Democratic liberal. His father was one of the regents who opposed the oath. The question came up some time in 1953 whether Gordon Griffiths should be recommended for promotion to tenure, and Ray Sontag was chairman of that committee. We looked it over, his record--

Lage: Were you on the committee?

Stamp: I was on the committee.

Lage: Was he a Europeanist or--?

Stamp: He's a European historian, yes. It was not a strong case. Sontag was quite clear he strongly opposed giving him tenure. I'm giving you what I think and what is not necessarily true--I always suspected that Griffiths' behavior during the Loyalty Oath had some impact on Sontag's feelings about Griffiths. But I agreed that it was not a strong case, so I sided with Sontag in recommending that he not be promoted. At that time--this is sort of hindsight--I thought that Sontag as a European historian of some distinction really was able to put aside his personal feelings and judge Griffiths on his record. Perhaps he did.

Lage: Well, you judged it the same way, in looking at his record.

Stamp: Right. So he was not promoted, and Griffiths left--maybe he had another year--but he left '53, '54, and got a job at the University of Washington at Seattle. We had been pretty good friends, especially during the oath controversy.

Lage: It must be hard to sit in on these tenure decisions, with people who are friends.

Stamp: It is. Yes, I know, it is.

Recruiting and Promoting in the History Department: Turning Points

William J. Bouwsma, Armin Rappaport

Stamp: Then I think it was a question of replacement for Gordon Griffiths. I'm moving ahead now--

Lage: That's fine.

Stamp: --into the fifties. Now we get to a controversy in the department that in my opinion determined what was going to happen in the department, what kind of a department it would be. The question was a replacement for Griffiths, but it was not in his field. Griffiths was in modern European history, but we were looking for someone in Renaissance-Reformation-Medieval history.

I can't remember who it was to replace, whether it was Kantorowicz or--well, the slot was there because Griffiths was leaving. Some time in '53 or early '54, I had a letter from two friends of mine who were teaching at the University of Illinois. Dick Current had left Mills College and had gone to the University of Illinois, and Frank Freidel, who had been teaching at Penn State for some years, was also at the University of Illinois, so I had two good friends in the department there. I had letters from both of them about a young historian named William J. Bouwsma, a Harvard Ph.D. who was in Renaissance and Reformation, and a European intellectual historian. Both of them told me that he was first-rate as a teacher and scholar.

I don't know why they both were thinking that they ought to help him get a job somewhere else. Maybe it was that Medieval studies and Renaissance-Reformation studies weren't going very well at Illinois.

Anyway--I should back up a bit. One of the men who was bitterly opposed to, or to put it the other way, was a strong supporter of Griffiths, was John D. Hicks. Hicks knew Gordon's family, and I think Hicks always felt that if you appoint a man assistant professor, he just automatically goes up, and he didn't want to refuse to promote Gordon Griffiths. In any case, Hicks was very strongly opposed to the report of the committee recommending nonpromotion.

In 1954, there was a convention of what was still then the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in Madison, and I was there, and Henry May and Carl Bridenbaugh were there, and Dick Current and Frank Freidel were there. We had authority from the

department--Jim King was chairman of the department at that time. I was vice chairman. I was vice chairman over and over again [1949-1951, 1954-1956, 1958-1959, 1962-1964].

Lage: [laughs] And never chairman.

Stampp: I didn't want to be. I was chairman for one year; I'll come to that later on, but vice chairman was very nice. I could put my nose into anything I wanted to and never had any responsibilities. Like vice president, almost. [laughter]

Anyway, we were authorized to talk to Bill. Bill Bouwsma came up from Illinois to talk to the Berkeley people who were at the convention.

Lage: You're all Americanists, and he's European--but maybe that doesn't matter.

Stampp: That's right, but we were there. It was not yet the time to invite Bill Bouwsma out to give a lecture here. I remember being very much impressed with Bill. Actually, I had met Bill previously when I came home from a sabbatical in 1953. I stopped in Champaign-Urbana to see Dick and Frank, and we were at a dinner party with Bill and Beverly Bouwsma. I remember that Bill was also interviewed by John Hicks in Madison, and this must have been the year that Griffiths was still there. The decision had been made, but he would not leave until the following fall.

I remember Hicks saying to Bouwsma, "I don't know what they're talking about; there's no job at Berkeley in your field." That was his contribution to this. He did not want Bill Bouwsma to come, but I think only because of Gordon Griffiths.

So Bridenbaugh came back and made a very good report on Bill from our talking to him, and I and others by this time had read the manuscript of his dissertation and were very much impressed.

Then it became clear that Raymond J. Sontag was going to be a bitter opponent of bringing Bill Bouwsma. Bill had a special interest in the Renaissance and Reformation, in religious history. He taught a course at the University of Illinois in the history of Christianity. Bill Bouwsma was a Dutch Calvinist. Again, I'm thinking of motives that I can't prove--I am only guessing. I think Ray Sontag was determined that no Dutch Calvinist was going to teach a course in the history of Christianity at the University of California at Berkeley as long as he was here. I can't think of any other valid reason, though others were given.

Lage: And what reason would Sontag have put forth? He evidently didn't put that forward.

Stampp: Well, I'll get to that. First off, there was a prejudice against intellectual history. I remember one member of the department--I think I'm not going to name names here--one member of the department saying, after reading Bill's dissertation, "This isn't history, it's philosophy."

By and large, the old guard was opposed to bringing Bill in. The first argument that was raised against his coming was, "He's a European historian, and he's never been to Europe," and that seemed to me a thing that was fairly easy to remedy. He didn't have to go to Europe to write his dissertation; it was based on published sources. Bill didn't have the money to go to Europe and had no grant yet. In any case, that seemed a pretty poor argument.

Well, we invited Gene Brucker to come in for the year, I believe it was '54-'55. You'll have to check the dates. Gene had just got his degree at Princeton in Medieval history. Gene arrived here, and we were all impressed with him. So Sontag now had a second argument: "We have Gene Brucker here, we can't use Bouwsma." I talked to Gene and said, "Gene, if Bill Bouwsma were here, would this compromise you? Would that mean that you two overlap?" Gene said, "Not at all. He's Renaissance and Reformation. I'm back in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries." Gene didn't think there was any overlap.

I went back with that and said--I can't remember the argument, but finally, there was a vote.

Lage: Would this have been a vote of the department, or just the committee?

Stampp: No, this was the tenure committee. Finally there was a vote, and we lost. The ones who really worked hard to bring Bill in were Carl Bridenbaugh, Henry May, Delmer Brown, George Guttridge, Paul Schaeffer, and I. There were six of us, as I recall. I may have missed a name, but those were the ones. I remember there were seven or eight against bringing him in, so we lost. I remember one saying, "Well, in a department this divided, I'm going to vote against it simply because we're divided."

Lage: There weren't two people you were considering? You weren't weighing Bouwsma against another person?

Stampp: There was another possible candidate in a different field, but as I recall, we weren't weighing Bill against anybody. No, it wasn't

that there was some other strong candidate in Bill's field. I think Sontag was very instrumental in bringing Gene here, because Sontag had been at Princeton, had taught at Princeton before he came here, and he had a lot of contact with Princeton. I think he went looking for somebody to bring in instead of Bill Bouwsma.

Anyway, the vote was taken. Jim King was chairman, but his term was about to end. George Guttridge was going to become the new chairman, and George wanted Bill Bouwsma, so the case went to the dean. Lincoln Constance was the dean. Lincoln sympathized with us, the ones who had lost. I remember Guttridge was on the phone to Lincoln Constance, the dean, and he sort of delegated me as vice chairman to go to talk to him.

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Stampp: When I saw the dean, he said, "I just can't act against the majority in the department." I said, "Lincoln, if I can persuade Bill Bouwsma to come here for a year as a visiting professor, would you support it?" He said, "Yes, I can do that, for one year. The chairman would want it, and who can oppose that? He's just coming to be looked over."

This was June. Bill was teaching summer session at the University of Indiana. I got on the telephone to Bill, and I had no idea whether Bill would do this or just tell us to go to hell. I said to him, "Bill, the dean has approved you coming to Berkeley for a year as a visitor."

Lage: He knew the situation.

Stampp: Oh, yes, he knew--well, at least he did know that Sontag was opposed. And to my surprise and pleasure, he said, "I'll come."

So he came, and I believe this is the year '55-'56.

Lage: We can check. [It appears to be '56-'57.]

Stampp: Yes. Bill came as a visitor for one year, and he did very well. He gave a public lecture that was first-rate. By the end of the year, the case against Bill had really collapsed. But there was still the problem of dealing with the people who were opposed to him.

The matter was complicated by the fact that Armin Rappaport had been up for promotion to tenure.

Lage: Now, what was his field?

Stamp: Armin Rappaport was a Ph.D. from Stanford in American diplomatic history. He came, as I recall, in 1948 or '49. He was a wow as a lecturer--he was a showman, but not much of a scholar. We looked over what he had written and did not think that he showed much promise. The first time, we decided not to promote him.

Lage: Would this have been an ad-hoc committee to look at his record?

Stamp: Yes. I was on that committee too, and I can't remember who else was on it, but in any case, we decided not to recommend promotion. Well, he had lots of friends in the department--John Hicks, Ray Sontag. The Bolton contingent all were gung-ho for the promotion of Rappaport, and the two issues got mixed up.

I remember talking to a Boltonite about Bouwsma and the record he had made, and he said, "Well, the only thing I'm interested in is what's going to happen to Rappaport." In other words, he was saying, "You support Rappaport, I'll acquiesce in Bouwsma." The Bouwsma supporters sort of talked this over and said, "Is this the price we have to pay?"

Lage: Was it clear that Rappaport was not a good scholar?

Stamp: I think so, and he certainly proved it for the rest of his career. His promotion came up at a tenure committee meeting, and some of us just shut up, and it went through.

Lage: So you made a decision--

Stamp: I hate to put it this way, but we made a deal--if you want Rappaport--. So he got promoted to tenure. Then I think it was a couple of weeks later when the Bouwsma issue came up, and what happened was that Sontag just didn't come to the meeting, and a number of others just didn't come. One or two may have been there, and they simply abstained. The result is that whoever was left voted for Bouwsma, and it was unanimous. So Bill got an appointment at Berkeley. I think he began his permanent appointment in 1956 or 1957.

Lage: The other people who opposed Bill Bouwsma, what reasons did they have, or did they just fall in line behind Sontag?

Stamp: Well, he hadn't gone to Europe, that was one argument.

Lage: [laughing] But nobody else did.

Stamp: Yes. This wasn't history, this was philosophy--that was another thing. Perhaps that was evidence of opposition to intellectual

history. Then we have Brucker and we don't need Bouwsma, that sort of thing. I mean, it was all flimsy stuff.

So Bill Bouwsma came, and that really was the breakthrough. With Bill's coming and Gene Brucker here, this department went through a transformation in the next few years. That's when we brought in lot of bright young historians.

Lage: Those were the years when the university had a good budget. That helps.

Stamp: Yes, the state was prospering, we had a liberal legislature, a friend in the governor, and a president who was close to the governor. Let's see--Earl Warren had left by this time; he was chief justice.

Lage: [Goodwin] Knight replaced him.

Stamp: Yes, and to our surprise, he turned out to be not as bad as we thought he would be. He was okay for the university. So things were going fine.

Lage: And Pat Brown was a good supporter of the university.

Stamp: Yes. Then there were lots of retirements--Palm retired, and not long afterwards, Paul Schaeffer retired, and Kerner retired, and Van Nostrand retired; Lawrence Kinnaird was another who retired in these years. So we had all kinds of openings, and that's when we really began to build a history department here. I can't name all of them, but it's when we brought in David Landes and Charlie Sellers, who was a very promising young political historian at that time, Tom Kuhn in history of science, Martin Malia in Russian history, but also he taught a course in European intellectual history, Nick Riasanovsky, and near the end of the decade Hans Rosenberg, and Dick Herr, and Carl Schorske, and Adrienne Koch.

Lage: That's the only woman you've mentioned.

Stamp: That's the only woman, that's right.

Lage: We'll have to talk about that at some point.

Stamp: We'll have to talk about that, because that's an interesting story too.

Lage: Now, when we talked earlier, I asked you--this was before we were taping--if you thought there was a turning point in the department. You mentioned 1950.

Stamp: Well, that was a time of bitter--

Lage: You said Carl Bridenbaugh--

Stamp: Oh, yes.

Lage: --and Joe Levenson.

Stamp: Oh, yes. Let's go back. Thank you for reminding me. The real turning point, though, was bringing in Bill.

Lage: Was it apparent on the face of things that Bouwsma was a really first-rate scholar?

Stamp: Oh, I think so. Yes.

Lage: Is that why you say it made such a difference?

Stamp: It did, but somehow, the retirements meant a change in the department. It opened the way for bringing in a lot of people. I think Bouwsma was the first step. Perhaps I should say that Bouwsma and Brucker were the first steps, along with the promotion of Levenson and Brentano to tenure.

Joseph Levenson

Lage: Back to 1950.

Stamp: Back to 1950. And this brings us back to Ray Sontag again.

Lage: He sounds like he was quite a powerful figure, Ray Sontag.

Stamp: He was a very powerful figure. He had a lot of influence in the administration, and he didn't hesitate to use it.

Joe Levenson was supported for an appointment in Chinese history by Woodbridge Bingham. Woodbridge Bingham was a Berkeley Ph.D.--incidentally, this department was full of Berkeley Ph.D.'s.

Lage: Then or now?

Stamp: It was then, yes. Full of them.

Stamp: Woodbridge Bingham was in Chinese history and wanted another person, especially in modern Chinese history. He came up with the name of Joe Levenson, who had just finished a Ph.D. at Harvard,

had been a member of the Society of Fellows and a student of Fairbanks at Harvard. You've got to remember the context. The Communists had just taken over China.

Lage: Right, this was a hot issue.

Stampp: And Fairbanks was certainly not a sympathizer of the Chiang Kai-Shek government.

Lage: Was he a sympathizer of the Mao contingent?

Stampp: Well, he was not a Maoist, he was not a Communist; I think he just knew that this was something that was going to happen.

Anyway, the name of Levenson came up, and I suspect at the time, in 1950, there was a certain amount of anti-Semitism. With the departure of Kantorowicz, there was no Jew in the department. Well, Armin Rappaport was Jewish, but somehow, he didn't count as a Jew, because he wasn't a Jew--he was a Jew without being the least bit interested in Jewish culture, and Joe Levenson was. Sontag's line was, "You know, the Communists have taken over in China, and here's Fairbanks who is rather suspect as far as his views are concerned. We ought to wait until the dust settles."

Lage: Not make an appointment.

Stampp: Not make an appointment. Well, Woodbridge Bingham really made a contribution. Woodbridge was not one of the great scholars of this department, but he really fought for Joe Levenson passionately, and he got the appointment. Joe was one of the really brilliant minds in this department until his untimely death.

Lage: You say anti-Semitism might have been involved.

Stampp: Yes, I think so. I'm not going to name names, but I can think of a couple of people in the department that--

Lage: Who would mention it up front?

Stampp: Not up front, no. They wouldn't go to the department and say, "He's a Jew," but that's what they said elsewhere.

Jews had a hard time back in the twenties and thirties in getting appointments. I remember Hans Rosenberg who came here was a Jewish refugee. He left Germany in about '33 or '34, and for years taught at Brooklyn College. He taught for a little while in a little college in Illinois, then taught for years at Brooklyn College and trained some very good scholars. He told me after he

came to Berkeley--he came in 1960--that he was once interviewed for a job at the University of Iowa, didn't get it. The dean at the university said, "You know, if we hire you, you'll be the first Jew that we've hired at Iowa." Before the war there was prejudice everywhere--my department at Wisconsin was full of anti-Semitism. So was Harvard.

Lage: There were quotas in admissions.

Stampp: Yes, you know about those quotas in various places. I seem to remember somebody saying, "If we took all the Jews that applied, we'd have nothing but Jews." After the war, prejudice broke down, and in the late fifties a substantial number of the new people were Jews--Tom Kuhn, David Landes. Then of course Leon Litwack later came in, and Larry Levine, and Dick Abrams, and Sam Haber, and so on.

Lage: But Levenson was one of the first Jews to come to Berkeley in history?

Stampp: Yes. As a matter of fact, I was just talking to my daughter, who's a professor of psychology out at St. Mary's College. She said, "You know, by this time, you can almost measure the quality of a department by the number of Jews in it," because they have come, in proportion to population, in much higher numbers into academic life, and that was certainly true here.

Lage: How was Levenson accepted socially, in the department?

Stampp: Very well. I mean, Joe was so charming and so brilliant, he was a joy to have around, and such a really decent human being.

Lage: Did politics, the Chinese situation, kind of haunt him?

Stampp: That didn't bother him. Joe was a Chinese intellectual historian, he was interested in Confucianism and Confucianist tradition. Joe was simply not involved.

Lage: Would Sontag--did he accept him, do you think?

Stampp: Sontag certainly recognized the brilliance of the man. Joe was charming and modest in his dealings with other people. There was never a touch of arrogance in him. He had every reason to be arrogant, because he was one of the most brilliant people in this department, no question about it. So yes, that was important.

Carl Bridenbaugh

Stampp: Now, Carl Bridenbaugh.

Lage: Right.

Stampp: This will give you some idea of how this department used to work in the bad old days. The department was divided between chairholders and nonchairholders. I mean, you could be an assistant professor, associate professor, professor, but above them were the chairholders. These were the gods of the department, and they were recognized as such even by Sproul. The chairholders when I came were John Hicks; Paxson retired I think a year after I came; Ray Sontag; Kerner. They were looking for a replacement for Paxson when he retired.

The first person they brought in was Dixon Wecter, who as I recall came in the fall of 1949. They tried Merle Curti and Curti--I mentioned that before--turned them down. Dixon Wecter was in southern California at the time, and a good scholar.

Lage: At UCLA?

Stampp: I can't remember where he was. He could have been at the Huntington for all I know, but I don't think he had an academic connection at that time. He was a good social historian for his day, and a very gracious member of the department. In June of 1950, he and his wife went to Sacramento, and he was to deliver a public lecture there, to whom I don't remember. On a Sunday morning, we got word that Wecter had died. He died of a heart attack suddenly. He and his wife were in their hotel room, and he got into bed, and she was in the bathroom, came out and found her husband dead.

Lage: Oh, my.

Stampp: At that time, the dean of the graduate division was William Dennes, a professor of philosophy. He and I drove up to Sacramento, really to bring his research assistant back, a young woman, a graduate student. We picked her up and took her back from Sacramento. His wife stayed on.

So this is June, summer is here, and we need a replacement for Dixon Wecter. So how did it happen? The chairholders got together, and some later rued the day, but they decided that Carl Bridenbaugh would be a good candidate. I'll tell you who he is in a minute.

Ray Sontag came into my office one day in the summer and said, "What would you think of Carl Bridenbaugh as a replacement?" There was never a meeting of the department about this. I said, "Well, all I know about him--he's a good social historian. He writes a lot. I don't know him personally, but yes, he sounds good." So in September, Carl Bridenbaugh was here, without any departmental action. I mean, it was the chairholders, Hicks and Sontag especially, who decided to bring Carl Bridenbaugh to Berkeley.

Bridenbaugh came from one of those old German families that came to America way back to the eighteenth century. He grew up in Philadelphia. He went to Dartmouth as an undergrad, he was a Ph.D. at Harvard and loved Harvard, and wanted desperately to go back to Harvard one day. The disappointment of his life was that he never did. He taught at Brown University for some years, and then at the time that he was brought here, he was at the Institute at Colonial Williamsburg. He was a colonialist in social history, and he wrote a lot of books about the revolutionary period and the earlier period about social life in colonial America. That summer, he was teaching summer school at the University of Minnesota, and they called him, and he agreed to come.

Lage: But just as a professor, not as a chair?

Stampp: As a chair. Oh, yes. He was to be the [Margaret] Byrne Professor of American History, in place of Dixon Wecter.

Lage: That is a quick decision for such an important position.

Stampp: Yes. It was Paxson's chair, the [Margaret] Byrne Professorship; then it became Dixon Wecter's, and then in 1950, Carl Bridenbaugh became the [Margaret] Byrne Professor of American History. John Hicks was the Morrison Professor of American History.

Well, Bridenbaugh came and turned out to be a tartar. He was a man utterly lacking in tact or grace.

Lage: Did anybody know him personally?

Stampp: I don't think anybody knew him personally when he came. He was a good scholar. At one committee meeting--must have been a meeting of full professors--Bridenbaugh said to these men--Sontag, Hicks, Van Nostrand, Palm, Kerner--"This department has a bad reputation in the East as one of the worst history departments in a major university." [laughter] How to win friends.

Lage: These are the men who brought him, basically!

Stampp: That's right. Bridenbaugh was determined that this department was going to be first-rate. His ego was obviously wrapped up in it. We all wanted that; well, some of us wanted to have a good department, and I suppose our egos were wrapped up in it some, but we wanted a better department in any case.

Lage: I'm surprised he came out here, with that opinion of the department.

Stampp: It was a good job. It was a chair, and a full professorship, and a good salary, and he was coming in at the top. He had a second marriage by that time. He had been married to a woman who was an historian, and they did a lot of collaborating in writing. He was now married to a woman who was not a historian named Roberta, and a very nice lady indeed.

Carl succeeded very soon in rubbing an awful lot of people the wrong way, but his goal was to make this absolutely a first-rate department. It was going to be a department to rival the Harvard history department, so I don't suppose anyone worked harder than Carl Bridenbaugh did to find good people and bring them in. He was one of the passionate supporters of Bill Bouwsma, for example, and I suppose it didn't hurt that Bill was a Harvard man. [laughter]

I got to know him fairly soon, and I got along with him for a long time, or in fact through the whole fifties, because, though I was not as passionate about it, I did want to have a better department, so we were nearly always working together. We got along socially as well. You had to take a few things from him. He wasn't very tactful. I liked talking to him, and when you were with him one on one, and you stayed away from a few subjects, he was a good conversationalist.

Carl was very sensitive about his brand of social history. It was rather old-fashioned social history. Somebody once called it pots-and-pans social history. He probably felt that emerging American intellectual history was in some way a negative commentary on his kind of history.

Lage: What do you mean by pots and pans?

Stampp: Well, the kind of social history where you talk about things like baseball and recreation--it was not analytical social history.

Lage: More descriptive.

Stamp: It was descriptive, yes, and I suppose some people thought that Bridenbaugh's history was rather old-fashioned, some mod social historians. Every generation has--

Lage: Their new approach.

Stamp: --the young Turks, and sooner or later, you get to find yourself on the other side. [laughs]

In any case, it became evident before the end of the 1950s that Bridenbaugh was very sensitive about this--that people didn't have much respect for the kind of history he was teaching. I remember one occasion when there was a dinner party at Carl Bridenbaugh's house, and there were three other couples--the Bouwsmas, the Browns, and the Stamms. Those three couples and the Bridenbaughs were very close. There were eight of us there that night. We had cocktails beforehand and a lot of wine, and Carl was in his cups. After dinner, for some reason, he took Bill Bouwsma, Delmer Brown, and me to his study downstairs.

The next thing we knew, and I don't really remember how it started, he was on a tirade about his kind of history not being appreciated here. We were just dumbfounded--I mean, we just sat or stood listening to him sounding off. I knew, and I suppose they knew, too, that he had some of these feelings, but not to the intense degree that they were being expressed there.

Lage: It was kind of ironic that he was working so hard to get the top people, at the same time some people were casting aspersions on his own character.

Stamp: Yes. Well, they weren't criticizing his history, though. I don't remember anyone here--at least anyone who spoke to me about it.

Bridenbaugh in no time had made an enemy of Sontag, and he had made an enemy of John D. Hicks. They both rued the day that they ever thought of bringing him here. He turned off a few of the younger people, but most of them had to admire the man's ability, and if his social history was old-fashioned, it was still good history of its kind. He taught well here and had some good graduate students, and certainly nobody could accuse him of not being interested in the future of the department and not doing his share in helping to build it.

Lage: He was never chair, was he?

Stamp: Oh, no. He could never have been [laughter] a chairman of the department. No, he was much too contentious and much too outspoken and much too tactless for that.

Well, I don't know how much more you want me to say about the building of the department in the fifties. You can see from the records who came in. We were really bringing in some very able historians.

Lage: Did procedures change, were hiring procedures more formal?

Stampp: Oh, I should say so. For one thing, in the fifties, the chairholders ceased to be the lords of creation around here. There were tenure committee meetings--

Lage: What is the tenure committee?

Stampp: The tenure committee included those who had tenure, the associate and full professors, including the chairholders.

Lage: It's not the ones who decided on tenure.

Stampp: The chairholders, certainly by the mid-fifties--and I give Carl Bridenbaugh at least part of the credit--were simply full professors in the department. They had a vote in the tenure committee, as did the youngest, newest associate professor, about bringing people in. So the whole idea that chairholders were a group apart collapsed in the 1950s. I never felt that way, Carl Bridenbaugh never felt that way, Henry May when he got his chair never felt that way, nor did later chairholders.

Graduate Students, and Women in the History Department

Lage: I would like to hear about students and women and curriculum.

Stampp: We had lots of controversies--this is an endless thing--over the graduate program, how broad it should be, and what kind of exams we should have--this is an ever-changing thing. I guess there is no such thing as the perfect graduate program, but our program changed in the fifties, the size of fields and that sort of thing.

Lage: Did you carry forth your experience at Wisconsin?

Stampp: Well, I hoped that there would never be anything like that at this institution, and there never was.

I would say that the quality of our graduate students went up very considerably, generally speaking, with some exceptions. The young historians we recruited began attracting good graduate

students. I had, on the average, much better graduate students by the end of the fifties than I had had when I first came out here.

Lage: Were a lot of them veterans?

Stampp: Yes. [counts] When I first arrived, quite a few of them were veterans. That was true in the whole graduate school. The veterans, by the way, certainly didn't turn out to be what C. Wright Mills and our paranoid group in Maryland thought they would be. They had had enough of the military for the rest of their lives, with few exceptions. They weren't, at least the graduate students here, weren't the kind who were going to American Legion meetings. They were pretty liberal people.

Lage: And they were older.

Stampp: They were older--that was to me one of the nice things about that time. I had graduate students who were just a few years younger than me, and I liked that. I had a kind of friendship and companionship with them that changed with the years.

Lage: Were there many women among them?

Stampp: Among the graduate students?

Lage: Do you remember back then how you regarded women students?

Stampp: I had several women graduate students. Unfortunately, for one reason or another, they didn't finish. They got an M.A. and decided to leave and teach. One woman passed her exams and was teaching in Texas without a degree and was going to write a dissertation on Reconstruction in North Carolina, but she never finished. So I had some rather bad luck with women Ph.D.'s.

Late in my career, I had two women who actually got their Ph.D.s, and one teaches at Scripps College now. The other was a woman who got her Ph.D. after her children grew up. Her husband was an economist at Standard Oil, so she did some part-time teaching here. She wrote and published two books, and that pleased me very much.

Lage: But there weren't very many women who really actively pursued the field?

Stampp: Well, there weren't all that many women in graduate school here in the 1950s. There were some. Henry May had one first-rate woman graduate student he thinks is one of the best.

Do you want to talk about Adrienne Koch?

Lage: Yes.

Stamp: Okay. I had met Adrienne when I taught at the University of Maryland. I think she got her Ph.D. in philosophy. One of her early books was on the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson. She was an ardent, passionate Jeffersonian and despised Alexander Hamilton. I remember her reading a paper one time on Alexander Hamilton which I thought was rather hard on him. [laughter] But she was a passionate Jeffersonian, wonderful teacher, a very good scholar.

Adrienne, when she first came here, was in political science. I think it was not a job with a promising future. She began teaching in our American studies program. She was very good. My son was in her undergraduate seminar and thought the world of her.

Adrienne was a bit contentious. She could be quite unpleasant on occasion. She seemed to feel that every man--she was the woman in the department--every man in the department was her rival, and she was going to put him down every time she had a chance.

Lage: This is all in the fifties also?

Stamp: In the late fifties and early sixties, yes. The man who really crusaded to bring Adrienne into the history department, I must say, was Henry May. He had great respect for her and her scholarship. She was sort of in intellectual history.

Lage: I think he did that American studies program, also.

Stamp: I'm not sure that Henry did. I know Adrienne was our representative in it. I'm not sure. You would have to check on that with Henry. I don't think so.

Adrienne got tenure, and I'm a little vague on this, but she was slow in getting promoted to full professor, and I know she was bitter about it.

Lage: And did she perceive it as discrimination against her as a woman?

Stamp: I'm not sure but I don't think so. Some questions were raised about what she was doing--her research--at the time. I began to realize that it was a very unhealthy situation to have only one woman, and a very dynamic one, in the department. When she left, I remember saying--and I will say it again, though it didn't sound right at the time--I said, "I'm going to be opposed to having just one woman in this department ever again. If we're going to have women in the department, we're going to have more than one, and not just one, because that is just a kind of tokenism." One woman

in the department didn't make sense, and we had plenty of trouble with Adrienne.

She left finally because her husband took a job in Washington. I can't remember whether it was the Brookings Institute. In any case, he got a job in Washington, and she left. Then she taught at the University of Maryland.

Lage: Who was the next woman who came?

Stamp: Well, there were a number of women. Within a few years, we had--I shouldn't say a lot. They haven't still become the majority, but quite a few women have received appointments.

Lage: Although I did add them up the other day, and there really didn't seem to be that many of them. I didn't bring my tally.

Stamp: Well, it's never been just one, that's for sure. [laughter] Some who have been here have left, but I'm not going to remember names. At one time, we had a woman in French history who moved to the University of Pennsylvania. I'm not thinking now about the eighties and women who have come in recently, because I don't really know them that well. But we appointed Paula Fass and Natalie Davis, and Diane Clemens. Of course, there are lots of others here now.

Lage: We're talking about a much later period.

Stamp: In the seventies and early eighties, we felt the pressure to bring more women in. I know in the case of one appointment--I was on the committee--it was quite clear that this committee was going to find a woman, that we were not out to find an historian, but we were out to find a woman historian. And we found one. I'm not sure that she was the best possible candidate, but she was very good. Natalie Davis was on the committee, and Win Jordan.

I have mixed feelings about affirmative action as it sometimes has been implemented, but I believe in it. If it's a question of affirmative action or no, I certainly would be for affirmative action. It was probably a good thing at that time to simply say, "Okay, we've just got to have some women in this department. They've been discriminated against for a long time."

I remember the attitude of my major professor way back in the 1930s. I was sitting in his office one day. I was a teaching assistant. A woman came in and talked to him about doing graduate work with him, and he said, "Why should I waste my time on you? You're going to get a degree, you're going to go out and get married, and that's going to be the end of it."

Lage: I recall your saying that in the thirties in Wisconsin, if a woman had a husband with a job, she couldn't be hired.

Stampp: No, that was at the high school and elementary school level.

Lage: I've heard similar stories right here at the university. Lincoln Constance told me about Mildred Mathias in botany. They agreed that she was a fine botanist, but her husband was employed, so she didn't need the work. So they let her come in and work as an unpaid research associate.

Stampp: I don't remember that, and I don't remember it here.

Lage: That might not have been true in history.

Stampp: I certainly never heard it in history. There may at one time have been some rule about not having husband and wife in the same department. I have heard of that.

Lage: Nepotism.

Stampp: Not having a husband and wife in the same department. That of course is gone now.

Lage: You had mentioned Delmer Brown, and I realized we haven't talked much about him.

Stampp: Yes. Delmer and I came the same year, 1946, and we became very good friends. In the whole controversy over Bill Bouwsma, Delmer Brown was always one of his strong supporters.

Lage: Did he play a role in the Joe Levenson thing, being in Asian history himself?

Stampp: Yes, but he was junior at that time. He came as an assistant professor, so he couldn't play the role that Woodbridge Bingham, who was a full professor, could play, but he was very strongly in support of Woodbridge, always supported him. Delmer became chairman--he must have become chairman in '58, because in the fall of '59 he went on sabbatical, and I suddenly found myself acting chairman of the department. I'll talk to you about that.

Lage: One other follow-up, though: I understand Bridenbaugh made a very controversial presidential address to the American Historical Association.

Stampp: That's right.

Lage: Was that something you would have expected of him?

Stamp: That was after he left here.

Lage: Yes, he wasn't here. Wasn't it in '62?

Stamp: Yes. It was a terrible speech.

Lage: Did you expect that of him?

Stamp: Oh, it didn't surprise me very much. There was a streak of anti-Semitism in Bridenbaugh. I remember him saying to me one time, "Have you ever noticed that every time Joe Levenson recommends somebody, it's a Jew?" Well, I hadn't noticed it, but there were good reasons why they might have been Jews because there were so many good Jewish historians around at that time. Well, that's enough.

I want to talk [another time] about my year as chairman, and what I thought about being chairman of the department, and why I never would be one again.

Lage: [laughs] Okay, that would be nice.

Stamp: And I have to talk about my break with Bridenbaugh, because we broke finally.

Lage: All right, then. I had thought we were through with Bridenbaugh, but he'll come up again.

Stamp: No, no, there's the whole question of why Bridenbaugh left here, and why he finally broke with most of his friends here.

Lage: Okay, good. Then we'll go on--

Stamp: --on into the sixties.

Lage: Into the sixties, which are always fun [see Chapter VII].

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[Interview 6: May 23, 1996] ##

The Peculiar Institution

Lage: This is our sixth interview session with Ken Stampp. Today is May 23, 1996. We're going to start today talking about *The Peculiar Institution*. We did talk a little bit about why you wrote it, but you might have other thoughts about that.

Stampp: About why I wrote it, yes--being a little unsure about precisely when I decided to do it. To my best recollection, it was a former graduate student, Richard Heffner, who, hearing my feeling that there was a need for a new book, said, "Well, why don't you write it?" and I thought about it. I do insist that it had nothing to do with the civil rights movement.

Lage: Okay, that's what I wanted to ask.

Stampp: The book came out in 1956, and so somebody suggested--I think it was Win [Winthrop] Jordan, actually, who used to be in our department--that it was somehow connected with the civil rights movement, and it really wasn't. My decision to write it dated back to the forties.

Lage: Oh, that early on?

Stampp: Oh, yes, I think 1948 is the year that I decided to write it.

Lage: And when did you start working on it?

Stampp: I began working on it as soon as I finished a book called *And the War Came*, which I finished in 1948. I began doing preliminary research, and here there were--well, I could almost say no source materials at all, except there were some printed sources which I used. I began reading in the secondary literature, not only U. B.

Phillips, but there were lots of Phillips-type histories of slavery in individual states. I did all that early research.

Then some time around 1950, '51, I wrote an article which I'm going to give you--or I can't give it to you, I'm going to lend it to you--called "Historians and Southern Negro Slavery." This was published in the *American Historical Review* in 1952. A little bit at the beginning might give you a further insight into my approach to history and my feelings about the problem of objectivity. This was really a critique of most of what had been written about slavery before and my feeling that a new book had to be written. That was after I decided to write the book, so it was in a way sort of an advance blurb for my book, if you want to call it that.

Dick Hofstadter and I at Maryland talked about Phillips a lot, never in terms of my writing a book, but about Phillips. He wrote an article that was published in the *Journal of Negro History*, I think it was 1944, called "U. B. Phillips and the Plantation Legend." [April 1944] Apart from certain racial assumptions, his principal criticism of Phillips was that his material came largely from the very largest plantations, owners of 100 or more slaves. One of his questions was whether the picture of slavery might be significantly revised if a lot of the smaller slaveholders--and of course, most slaveholders were smaller slaveholders--if they were included in the research. Granted that would be difficult, because they didn't leave as many manuscripts, letters and diaries and account books.

That was a point well taken, and I was certainly careful to use as many of the smaller planter records as I could. After all, there were only something like 2,000 slaveholders who owned over 100 slaves. Most of them owned less than ten slaves. So when you think about slavery, you're not really--as far as the number of owners are concerned--thinking about big slaveholdings but rather very small ones.

Lage: Where did you find the sources for these smaller owners?

Stamp: Well, I used census returns for 1860 to find out how much of the staple crops--cotton, tobacco, sugar, rice--were raised by these smaller planters. Very seldom did they get into rice-growing and sugar-growing, because that involved a very substantial investment in machinery. But they were very heavily involved in the cotton-growing and in tobacco-growing and hemp-growing in Kentucky and Missouri. I just went through these various states--I can't remember my sampling device, but I would get several hundred smaller slaveholders in South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and so on, and find out what they did: how much tobacco they

raised, how much cotton they raised, and how much they were able to produce per slave hand compared with the larger slaveholders.

I did find a few diaries and records of smaller slaveholders. You have to hunt for them.

Lage: Tucked away in different repositories?

Stamp: Yes, in different repositories.

Lage: Did you make any amazing finds, or just stumble on something?

Stamp: Well, there are some obvious generalizations that you could make and that I made, and one is that they were almost--I was going to say almost never--but let's say rarely absentee owners. There were some professional men, doctors and lawyers, who would have a farm and a small number of slaves, ten to twenty slaves, and were only really part-time owners or operators of farms or plantations.

Obviously, slaves and masters were closer together--the white owners and the slaves lived much more intimately than they did on large plantations. It almost never happened that a slaveholder of that type would have an overseer. He would do his own overseeing. Sometimes--it was not uncommon at all, in fact, for the slaveowner and members of his family to work in the fields with his slaves.

Lage: That's a very different picture from the commonly held view.

Stamp: Yes. Particularly in the upper South and in Virginia and North Carolina and Tennessee where there were lots of these small slaveholdings. You would find cases of owners working in the fields, if not all year round, certainly at the crucial time, and that's the harvest in the fall, when you've got to have every hand you can get to pick cotton. Then everybody was out there: the farmer and his wife and his children and whatever slaves he had and their children and so on. Also that was true of tobacco: when it was ready, you had to get it in.

Lage: It sounds more like a Northern farm, except for the slavery.

Stamp: Yes.

One question that I was always interested in was whether, from the slave's point of view, it would be better to live on a smaller establishment than on a larger one, and on that I'm not sure. In the areas of small slaveholdings, the black slaves were heavily outnumbered by the white population. In the areas of very large slaveholdings, you might find more than 50 percent of the population black slaves. In South Carolina and Mississippi,

slaves outnumbered whites in the total population, and in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, they were about 50-50, half slave and half white.

So the question is, how would the slaves feel about living in a sea of whites, as compared to a situation where they're in the majority and where it was easier for the slave to escape the eternal observation of whites? In their slave quarters, say, a slaveholding of seventy-five or 100 slaves or more, if you think of the slave quarters as a kind of little community where they could have some kind of community life and frequently be free of observation by whites, was that more comfortable than living somewhere in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia on a holding of maybe one slave family or two slave families and whites everywhere, where you had no community life of your own? I don't know. I suspect that they might have found it better to live on the larger slaveholding.

Lage: There were no sources, I would assume, to address that question?

Stampp: No, you just had to speculate on that. There were some travelers, Frederick Law Olmsted being the most prominent of them, who had observations and speculated on problems like that, and I found Olmsted one of my most important sources.

Lage: I noticed you cited him a great deal.

Stampp: Oh, yes.

Lage: Did he seem to be a good observer?

Stampp: He was a very good observer, and he was not an abolitionist. He was not a supporter of slavery by any means, but he didn't go down there as a crusading abolitionist. He couldn't have got around as well as he did if he had been. I thought he was a very reliable source, yes.

Lage: Had he been used by Phillips and others with different views?

Stampp: Not very much. Phillips was suspicious of Olmsted. I used him a good deal more than U. B. Phillips did. Phillips tended to use the reminiscences of slaveholders after the war, and I used them much less, because they tended to be rather sentimental reminiscences about the idyllic conditions on plantations, and the harmony between the races--all that sort of thing.

Another question was whether the treatment of slaves was better on the smaller holdings than on the large plantations. Once again, I don't know. I found cases of small slaveholdings

where the treatment was pretty rough, and lots of cases on large plantations where the food and shelter certainly matched the food and shelter and clothing that slaves got on the smaller holdings. So it would be very hard to generalize. I think that as a generalization, they were better off, they were happier, on smaller holdings than on large holdings.

Lage: Is that something you address specifically in *The Peculiar Institution*?

Stampp: Yes, you'll find it there.

In the spring of 1952, I had applied for a Guggenheim, and I received one. I was due for a sabbatical. So I planned to be away for the whole year, from the summer of '52 to the summer of '53. That's when I was going to do the bulk of my research on this book.

I went to Wisconsin in June of 1952, I think I've mentioned that, to teach the summer session. I taught summer school, and in early September, late August, my wife and my two children and I drove to Washington, or to Hyattsville, which is between Washington and the University of Maryland. A professor from the University of Maryland was on leave that fall, and I was very fortunately able to rent his house.

During the fall, from September until January, my children went to a public school nearby, and I spent most of my time at the Library of Congress, going through newspapers and manuscripts, a wonderful depository; also some time at the National Archives. Then I took advantage of my location to go to Annapolis and use some of their county records, court records. I was interested in going through will books to get some evidence from them on slaveholders' attitudes toward their slaves and what they did with their slaves in their wills.

Lage: Had this been done before by other scholars?

Stampp: Not to any substantial extent. I think I was the first one to use them extensively. I went through thousands of wills all over the South, just to see what they had to say about their slaves. There were a few masters who would emancipate their slaves, some who would emancipate a woman and her children, which always led me to suspect there was a specific and special reason for emancipating that woman and her children. I found that in the great majority of cases that didn't happen, an overwhelming majority of cases, and that slaves were treated like any other property: slaves were to be divided among the heirs. Sometimes--this was always slightly suspicious, too--a master would will one woman and her

children to a son with instructions about how she was to be treated--that sort of thing.

I also went to Baltimore to use the Maryland Historical Society materials. I went to Richmond while I was in Washington. I went to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. So I was able to cover a lot of libraries from Hyattsville.

Researching Slavery and Living in the South, 1952-53

Stampp: In January, I moved to Chapel Hill. I had written to a friend at the university there, and he had found a quite satisfactory place for us to live in a suburb of Chapel Hill called Carboro, which is a mill town. It was rather interesting living in a Southern mill town for a while.

Lage: Carboro, did you say?

Stampp: It's strictly a mill town. I think almost everyone there in the town was a textile worker. The virtual established church of Carboro was the Baptist church. I'm sure that 90 percent of the people in that town were Baptists. The Baptist minister used to haunt the school grounds. You know, the school itself was almost a Baptist school, the public school. My children found it not the happiest term, going to that school. [laughs]

Lage: It must have been quite an experience.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: How old were they then?

Stampp: Oh, let's see. In '52 my son was ten, and my daughter was seven. I remember one of the humiliating experiences of my son's life: they were putting on Snow White, and he had to be one of the dwarves. The thing that embarrassed him was that his accent was wrong. He didn't sound like these people. I remember Snow White coming on stage and saying, "A'm Snow Whaaat." [laughter]

Lage: Then you had this one Northern dwarf!

Stampp: One Northern dwarf, with that funny accent.

While I was at Chapel Hill, I spent by far the majority of my time in the Southern Historical Collections at Chapel Hill, which is the greatest depository of material on slaveholding

plantations, Southern agriculture in general. Each day I was there when it opened and was there until it closed. I went to Duke, which was only ten miles away and used materials there. I went to Raleigh, where I got census returns for the state and went through them as well as looking at will books.

Then I made a trip down to Columbia, South Carolina, and Charleston, and also to Savannah. Didn't find much in Savannah. There was the Telfair Academy, which had one fine collection of a rice and cotton planter. Found a lot in Columbia, South Carolina; some but not much in the South Carolina Historical Society. In Savannah, I went to the Georgia Historical Society and asked about plantation records, and the woman who was in charge said with great bitterness, "They're all up in Chapel Hill."

Lage: That's why it's so great there.

Stampp: Yes. The reason for that was that in the early twentieth century, the head of the Southern Historical Collection, a professor at the university, J. G. deRoulhac Hamilton, had gone all over the South urging people to look up in their attics, look in their trunks, and he picked up a tremendous lot of material and brought it to Chapel Hill, I understand sometimes a little unscrupulously. He would say, "Send it, we'll return it," and he never returned it. In any case, he, more than anyone else, was responsible for bringing this tremendous collection to Chapel Hill. I found more material on Mississippi in Chapel Hill than I did in Mississippi.

Lage: Of course, it made it easier for you as a researcher.

Stampp: It did.

Lage: Did this involve correspondence--I'm just trying to think what kind of sources you were using. Were some of the primary sources in Chapel Hill correspondence and diaries?

Stampp: The material was manuscripts, collections of letters and diaries, and account books. A lot of the larger slaveholders kept written records of expenditures and purchases, and frequently diaries where you would get some interesting material on relations between masters and slaves. They're pretty candid in their diaries.

Then I took one long trip, lasted about three weeks, driving to Baton Rouge, and using the material in the State Department of Archives and History in Baton Rouge. I went to Jackson, Mississippi, and didn't find much. I went to Montgomery, Alabama. That was an interesting time. I found quite a lot there and once again used the census returns there. The head of the Alabama State Department of Archives at that time was Mary Bankhead Owen,

the aunt of Tallulah Bankhead. Actually she raised Tallulah, and I think one understood Tallulah better after finding out about her aunt.

Her aunt was in her eighties. I was there in February or early March 1953. That puts her birth back somewhere in the 1870s. Anyway, everyone had to be ushered in to Mary Bankhead Owen before you could use the material. I went in and sat down and told her what I was doing. That was always a problem--my accent. After talking to her for a while, she said, "Well, Professor Stamp, we'll do everything we can for you. We have all the material here, just ask for it," and the women who did the hunting were very good.

As I was walking out, "But I just want you to know that as far as I'm concerned, you're still a damn Yankee." [laughter]

Lage: Said with--

Stamp: Oh, she said it with passion, she said it with feeling. This was not a joke. She meant it.

Lage: She would help you, but--

Stamp: Yes. Quite obviously, she didn't think it was the greatest idea she had ever heard herself, somebody coming out of Wisconsin, some damn Yankee writing a book about slavery.

I can't think of any place where I didn't have everything that I asked for, and some even helped me find things. I remember in Virginia, as a matter of fact, in the Virginia Historical Society, a little old lady coming to me with something she was holding in her hand. It was a little booklet. She asked me, "Would you like to find out something about the other side of slavery?" I assumed she was thinking, "He's a Yankee, he's going to be writing a nasty thing about slavery." What she really meant was that she had a diary, or an account book and diary, of a slavetrader and somebody who was in the business of buying slaves and hiring them out to transportation companies, canal companies, factories, and so on. I had misunderstood her completely. I thought this little Southern lady was going to be showing me something very good about slavery. It was quite the reverse.

Everywhere I went--in South Carolina, needless to say in Alabama, in Louisiana--I had to count on spending at least an hour with the director of whatever it was--the department of archives or the historical society--listening to a lecture on slavery.

Lage: Oh, you're kidding!

Stampp: Oh, yes. They all had to give me a lecture on what slavery--

Lage: Is this before you got into the archives?

Stampp: This is when I came. I would go in and say, "I'm Professor Stampp from the University of California. I'm writing a book on slavery," and they would say, "Well, sit down, we can talk." And the next thing I knew, I was getting a lecture on slavery from them.

Lage: That could have been a book in itself.

Stampp: Yes, and there were some amazing things that I learned. In South Carolina, I remember, the head of the archives told me that his family--and I would always get a bit of family history--that his family was one of the smaller slaveholders; they only owned about 100 slaves. Well, you know where that put him. I remember going on a tour in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, when I was there, and being told that in West Feliciana Parish, most of the slaveholders owned 300 or more slaves. Well, the census returns said there wasn't a single person in that county who owned 300 or more slaves. So these things did go with memory.

Lage: Great mythology.

Stampp: Yes, a lot of mythology.

Lage: But nobody put roadblocks in your way, it seems?

Stampp: No one put roadblocks in my way. I can't think of a single person. Probably someone in the Bancroft Library.

Lage: I'll report that. [laughter] This was a segregated South you were touring.

Stampp: This was a totally segregated South. Now, in 1953, in Chapel Hill, one read the *Raleigh News and Observer*. That was the Democratic liberal Southern newspaper, liberal--more liberal than most. The Supreme Court in 1953 had been hearing the segregation cases, but that spring, the court asked the defense and the prosecution to reconsider certain points, and so they put off for another year their decision.

I remember an editorial--now, this is the *Raleigh News and Observer*--an editorial in the *Raleigh News and Observer* saying, "Thank goodness, the court has given us another year to make our separate, segregated black schools equal." Not to get rid of them, but simply to see to it that they were in fact equal. That was the liberal position on this at that time. "Let's do

something about the black schools," but certainly not, "Let's integrate the schools."

Yes, this was a totally segregated South, and it took a while to get used to it. But I'll tell you something that was sobering. After being in Chapel Hill six months and seeing everything segregated--waiting rooms, restrooms, drinking fountains, the schools, the churches--it's very easy to get used to it and think, Well, this is the way it is. So your capacity for indignation has limits, and you've got to be terribly committed to not let it sort of get you to feeling, Well, this is the way it is.

Lage: So you could understand the *Raleigh News and Observer's* kind of limited vision.

Stampp: Right. Yes. There weren't many liberal Southerners who were advocating total integration. There were some who were appalled at the hypocrisy and the failure to provide adequate facilities, schools and so on, for blacks, and there was a scattering of Southerners who wanted the whole system to be broken down. C. Vann Woodward, a historian, was one of them, and there were others.

Lage: Did the community you were living in have a black population, the mill town?

Stampp: No. No, I don't know that there were any blacks in Carboro. You know, the textile mills were strictly for white workers. The agreement, written or unwritten, after the Civil War and after industry began developing in the South, was that the textile mills were for white workers, and the farms were for the black workers. Chapel Hill had a small black population, but I cannot remember any street in Carboro where there was a black population. There may have been, but I can't remember. Certainly it was an overwhelmingly white community.

Lage: Did the context of that experience bring anything to the way you approached the book, do you think?

Stampp: Well, the people in Chapel Hill were very charming. I got to know almost everyone in the history department--they were very cordial, they invited me to all kinds of social affairs, and they were very nice people. Southerners are very nice people, you know. I certainly don't think it changed my--well, it probably changed my attitude. This was the first time I had ever lived in the South, and so that was good for me. It may have softened my attitude toward whites in the South, but certainly not my feelings about slavery, or the way I was going to write my book about slavery. I think it was a good experience for me to have had, not only in

Chapel Hill but in the other places I went to while I was down there.

Lage: Do you think the tone of the book might have been different if you had--of course, you couldn't have done the book without going there.

Stamp: I couldn't have done the book without going there, yes. I don't think it had any effect on the tone of my book. A lot of the Southerners whom I saw, when the book came out, didn't write to me and say, "This is a great book." [laughter]

Lage: Right. Now, this was a very different kind of history, it appeared, from what you had done before, the much more political.

Stamp: Well, this is strictly nonpolitical, yes.

Lage: Was it difficult to switch gears?

Stamp: In a way, this book had its beginnings--I probably should have said this to begin with--in my lectures in my course on the old South.

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Stamp: As a matter of fact, I think I remember going back to my lecture notes and finding that the general organization of my slavery book was very similar to the organization of my lectures on slavery. What I did was sort of fill it out with the research material that I had.

Lage: But the actual choice of the organization, how you proceeded--

Stamp: Yes. Now, the organization is the same. I modified my views through my research on a number of things, and perhaps most important and most complete--I remember in my lectures on slavery making the argument that in the long run, slave labor was an unprofitable way because the slaves had no incentive to work, and planters sort of indulged themselves. They didn't have a real entrepreneurial spirit--all of this was sort of traditional. Even in the pre-Civil War period, those who defended slavery rarely defended it on economic grounds that it was a profitable labor system, which it was.

After the war, U. B. Phillips, for example, argued that slavery was not profitable, that slaveholders didn't really hold their slaves because they were getting rich; it was a matter of controlling an alien population--the blacks would be a threat to society if they were emancipated, and so on.

Well, I went through record books and the census returns where I found out how much small slaveholders were producing, and I found that I had to reverse myself completely--that by and large, it was a profitable thing to invest your capital in slave labor, and that probably in the pre-Civil War period, there was no better way in the Deep South to make a good living, in fact no better chance to become fairly wealthy than by investing in land and slaves.

So my research really did change my view on that completely, and in I think it was my second-to-last chapter called "Profit and Loss," I make the argument for profitability. And incidentally, most economists now have taken that position, economic historians who looked at it.

Lage: So are there any other changes in your perception, in regards to the research?

Stamp: There were other changes, but I think it was more a matter of beginning to think about things I hadn't thought about before. For example, while I was doing my research, I read a book by a sociologist, I think his name was [Robert L.] Southerland, I'm not sure. I can't remember the name of the book, but it was a book about the black population in Chicago in the twentieth century. One of his chapters was on black children growing up to find out that they're black. How do they find out?

He found that sometimes it was the parents who simply said, "You know, watch out for Whitey," or something to that effect. "Don't get into them, don't mess around with them." Or it might have been some traumatic experience that a young black child--in one way or another, every black child had to learn his differentness.

That gave me some thoughts about black families in slavery. How did black children learn about--

Lage: Their place.

Stamp: --about their place, that's right. And it's an interesting thing to think about what parents might have told them, and what kind of experience they might have had, what it would be like for a black child to see his father or her father whipped, or his or her mother whipped--I know that lots of black children saw it. And what would that do to them? All of these questions I hadn't really thought about until I started working on this.

Lage: And so some of the book was actually putting yourself imaginatively in the place of--

Stamp: Trying awfully hard, trying awfully hard to do it, and realizing always that--and I have that explicitly stated in there--if you haven't been a slave, you don't know what it's like to be a slave. You can think about it and wonder about it, but there was one woman who said, "It's only he who has endured it that knows what it's like to be a slave."

I got interested in role-playing, and I read some of the psychological literature on role-playing, and wonder about the degree to which a slave who had to play a role--in other words, to get on with the master, you had to be a Sambo: amiable, agreeable. There were some slaves who couldn't do it and were the trouble-makers.

But to what extent did they actually internalize this? How much was this conscious or at least semiconscious role-playing on their part? And were they different in their quarters? I think they were, that among themselves they had their own scales of values, and ideas of who were heroes.

Lage: Now, what kind of sources would you draw on for that?

Stamp: Sometimes planters' records, sometimes the reminiscences of--lots of slaves wrote. I shouldn't say wrote--

Lage: Dictated.

Stamp: Dictated autobiographies. Some of them wrote--Frederick Douglass certainly did--but most autobiographies are suspect, because usually they were dictated or written by abolitionists, and we don't know how much they threw out leading questions and that sort of thing. But you found a lot in the planters'--every now and then--confessions. He's writing to himself, doesn't expect anyone to read his diary, and he says, "I must say, they bewilder me sometimes, the things they do and the things they say. You can never trust them. They tell you one thing with a smiling face, and they're thinking something else." Things like that crop up, but these are the more perceptive owners. A lot of them weren't all that perceptive, but this gave me some clues.

Now, another source: the agricultural journals of the pre-Civil War period. There was one called the *American Cotton Planter*, and there were a whole series of agricultural journals--and one of the most common articles in the agricultural journals had a title something like this: "On the Management of Slaves." These articles were written--most of the subscribers were slaveholders--so they were writing to each other. "This is how I do it." And they posed the problems: "If you do this, the slaves are probably going to behave that way," and "What's the best way

of disciplining them?" and so on. I found those articles extremely revealing.

Lage: Because they're describing the so-called problems of slaveholders.

Stampp: Yes, right. Another source that I found very valuable were fugitive slave ads, and I read thousands of them, because if you're looking for a fugitive slave, you've got to be accurate in your description. There's no point in concealing the facts. So you would find slaves described as to their personalities. What was the most common one? "He's very plausible, he stutters when he speaks." In other words, he knows how to talk to white men, so watch out. Sometimes they would warn that he could be violent.

Lage: Would they describe scars?

Stampp: That's right, their marks--"His back is marked"--or in the early nineteenth century about brand marks. When the abolitionists began picking that up, you found less and less of that in the fugitive slave ads.

Lage: Too dangerous.

Stampp: I found much more of it earlier than later on.

Lage: Had Phillips used this kind of thing? Or any of the others?

Stampp: Not the way I used it. [laughter]

Lage: I'm sure not with the same conclusion.

Stampp: No.

Now, another source that was available--and I used very sparingly--were slave narratives collected in 1920s and early 1930s. They're all published now. These were collected in the thirties as one of the WPA writers projects, and I found them no more reliable, as far as the information slaves provided, than the reminiscences of slaveholders when they wrote their sentimental books about life on the old plantations. Most of the people who collected the reminiscences were white, they were talking to people in their eighties, and by and large the reminiscences of these people were about their childhood back in the 1850s. You know, in early years, life for these slave children wasn't all that bad. They had sort of sentimental memories about playing around on the plantation.

Lage: Did they tend to paint a happier picture than you would have expected?

Stamp: Well, I was surprised how many times it was happy. Remember, most of these old blacks were very poor. Social Security was coming in, and they were wondering about pensions and if these people were coming around to see whether they could have a pension. And they were talking to whites. By and large, the majority of them say, "You know, it wasn't all that bad," and I don't believe that.

Lage: So they're not a source about what happened in the 1850s, but maybe something about the 1930s.

Stamp: They may well be a source about that, and about the post-Reconstruction, post-Civil War period, and an interesting source, too, for somebody interested in the problems of memory and how one filters things. I think one tends to filter out a lot of the bad, and one wants to feel that his life was not a total loss. So I used them sparingly. I've been criticized for that, too. I guess I should have used them more just so I could have defended myself there.

Lage: [laughs] Well, in retrospect, how would you have done it differently if you were writing it today, or would you have done anything differently?

Stamp: Oh, there are lots of things that would be different. Shall I finish talking about writing the book?

Lage: Sure.

Stamp: And then talk about what I would do later on.

Lage: That's fine.

Stamp: When the Guggenheim year was over in July, we came back to Berkeley. I had a little more research to clear up out of secondary sources, but I began writing in the late fall or maybe early winter of 1953-'54. It was a terrible experience beginning that book. I was terribly concerned about this book and my responsibility in writing it. I really wanted to write a book that would persuade Southerners that slavery wasn't quite like the myths and legends.

Lage: I'm just remembering something you said here about, "It's an article of faith that knowledge of the past is a key to understanding the present." Did you have that sense--

Stamp: Yes, sure.

Lage: --that you could make a difference?

Stamp: Yes. I did not want to write a piece of abolitionist propaganda, although I've been accused of that. So when I started writing that first chapter, I wrote over and over and over again. I would write it, and it wasn't right, and I still am not satisfied with it. For a while I began to think, "You are never going to write this book. It's just too much for you." But I finally did get a first chapter written that I felt was going to be okay.

Lage: Is this a solitary activity for a historian, or do you have colleagues that you shared these problems with?

Stamp: No, this was a solitary activity. However, I did send my chapters out to different people to read, and while I was writing, I sent my chapters to two people. I don't recall showing them to anyone here until the book was finished. One was Dick Hofstadter at Columbia, and the other was my friend Richard Current, who at that time--I think he was at the University of Illinois. Dick Current, again, was very good in helping me with my prose. Hofstadter read it, didn't worry too much about the prose but commented on interpretations.

It's interesting, I got opposite advice from the two about what I was doing. Hofstadter's comment about halfway through the book was, "Ken, you're pulling your punches. Why don't you really write what you feel about this? Let your feelings come out in this book." Current wrote, "Ken, keep calm. Don't--" in effect, the opposite. Just the opposite.

Lage: Did they perceive what you had done differently, or did they have very, very different ideas?

Stamp: Well, they're both good liberals, but Dick Current wanted me to write a book that didn't show much moral indignation, and I think that's the term that Dick said: "Let your moral indignation come out a bit more." So I decided maybe what I'm doing was okay the way I was doing it, because I got these two opposite reactions.

I finally got through the first chapter, and I was writing most of 1954. Then I had an invitation to teach at Harvard for the winter-spring term of 1955. By that time, I must have been more than halfway through writing the book. In any case, Harvard was a wonderful opportunity. My teaching load was fairly light, we found a wonderful place to live in Cambridge, on the grounds of the Episcopal Theological Seminary, an old house built in the 1840s with lots of room in it.

But the main thing is that I had a light teaching load. I lectured twice a week in the American history survey course--maybe it was three times, I'm not sure--and ran a seminar, and I had

just a small group of students in the seminar. I had an office in the stacks of the Widener Library and free access to everything in the stacks, so any book I needed, I could find there. I found some pre-Civil War books that I hadn't found elsewhere there, and I wrote steadily. In June, 1955, the book was finished.

Lage: Finished up in Cambridge.

Stamp: I finished the book in the stacks of Widener Library at Harvard in June, 1955.

Reviews and Responses

Stamp: Now, the question of a publisher. I have to go back a bit. Knopf published it, but I've told you earlier about my unfortunate relationship with Knopf with my book *And the War Came*--giving them an opportunity to reject it twice. It was a double humiliation. Anyway, *And the War Came* was out in 1950, and it had very good reviews. Alfred Knopf, the old man, was pretty peeved at one book man at Knopf, one of their field men, because he's the one who had solicited the manuscript. I had said, "I will never publish a book with Knopf."

Anyway, this man came to me in 1952 at a convention and said, "I hear you're writing a book about slavery." I said, "Yes, but Knopf is not going to have it." I don't think is an exaggeration: I think he must have been under considerable pressure from Knopf because he practically got on his knees and asked for it. I said, "I'll never send you the manuscript. If you want to give me a contract without ever seeing the manuscript, okay." And I got it.

Lage: [laughter] Interesting! Sight unseen.

Stamp: Sight unseen. I was never going to let them turn down another manuscript or another book of mine. So I'm very glad because Knopf makes beautiful books, and he does a pretty good job of promoting.

So I sent the manuscript to Knopf the late summer of 1955, and I had an editor whose name I can't remember, and he disappeared before the book was finished. He probably was fired. Knopf was always firing people. So for the last bit, I didn't have an editor. The manuscript--it was a clean manuscript. I had a typist who really made no typos--I couldn't find any--and raised a couple of questions. She did a little bit of editing, actually, anyway. So the manuscript was a nice clean one that I sent to

Knopf; then later in his reminiscences, Alfred Knopf said that in all the time that he was running his company, he had only received two manuscripts that could go straight to the publisher without editing. Mine was one, he said; another was a friend of his who also had written on black history.

Well, that was partly true, but it also covered the fact, or disguised or concealed the fact, that my editor had been fired.

Lage: [laughter] And that's why it went directly--interesting.

Stampp: Anyway, it's a nice story, and it never made me unhappy to have Knopf say that my manuscript was so letter-perfect.

Lage: Let me just ask you, you mention here other people who read parts of it.

Stampp: Yes. These were people who read--now, Carl Bridenbaugh read the whole manuscript, and Henry May--I mention Henry May, don't I?

Lage: Frank Freidel, and the one I was curious about was Paul Taylor.

Stampp: Paul Taylor was an economist here, an agricultural economist. I knew Paul Taylor fairly well, used to lunch with him at the Faculty Club. I showed him the manuscript, and he made some interesting comments on what I said about the economics of slavery, which I found very useful.

Who else? There are other people that I talked to about specifics.

Lage: Oh, yes, you mentioned people that you--

Stampp: Yes, that I talked to about specific things. Frank Freidel. Henry May read the whole manuscript, Taylor read the whole manuscript, and then I say, "I had valued advice from Reinhardt Bendix, John Hope Franklin," and these others. These are people I talked to about the book. James King, a Bolton student, had written a dissertation on slavery in the West Indies, so we had a lot to talk about, comparing and so on. He never published his manuscript.

Lage: John Hope Franklin--how much interchange did you have with him?

Stampp: I got to know John in 1949, and we talked a lot about it, at different times. We met at conventions. John actually came out and taught here one summer, I can't remember which summer it was. It was the early 1950s that he taught a summer session at

Berkeley, and I saw a lot of him then. He knew what I was working on, I talked to him about that.

Lage: Did anyone give you advice that turned you in new directions?

Stampp: I don't think so. I can't think of anyone whom I listened to and took a lot of advice from on specific things; neither Dick Hofstadter or Dick Current changed my direction by their advice.

Lage: Right, which would have been very basic.

Stampp: They sort of canceled each other out, in a way. John Hope Franklin--I think it was 1949 that he published the first edition of his book *From Slavery to Freedom*, and he had a good-sized chapter on slavery, which I read and talked to him about.

Lage: Had he done work in sources such as you had?

Stampp: No, not on slavery. His book was not--actually, it couldn't be a deeply researched book because he was covering an enormous span of time, from the colonial period to the twentieth century. I wouldn't call it a textbook, but it was a survey that had to be written primarily from published sources.

Lage: Okay. Have we talked about the reception?

Stampp: All right. [laughs] That's interesting. It was published in October, 1956. As far as I know, it received no prizes. There was no Pulitzer prize or Bancroft prize. There was a prize at that time given for the best book in Southern history, and it didn't even win that prize, though I think it was by far the best book in Southern history that year. The only prize actually came years and years later, and that's--

Lage: The Lincoln prize.

Stampp: I got the Lincoln prize in 1992--what does it say there?--1993.

Lage: 1993, but that was for cumulative work?

Stampp: Well, it was sort of a lifetime award, but the thing they always featured in their presentation prize was *The Peculiar Institution*, which most people think is the most important book I wrote.

The reviews? I don't see that there's any point, but I have typed out what one reviewer says against what another reviewer says, and they contradict each other. That's always true, though, in books. I would say the review that to me was the most satisfying, gratifying, was the review written by C. Vann

Woodward. It was published in the *Herald-Tribune* book section in the fall of 1956, and it was unqualified praise for the book. Vann being a Southerner is what made me especially pleased.

There were quite a number of good reviews, as a matter of fact, but quite hostile--and this really disappointed me--quite hostile reviews came out of the South, by and large.

Lage: From, when you say "out of the South," by established Southern historians?

Stampp: I'm talking about the review in the *Journal of Southern History*, for example, written by a Tennessean. [laughs] I did kind of laugh at the time, but it hurt a little bit. His last comment was, "It's been a long time," I don't know how many years, X number of years, "since U. B. Phillips' book was published on slavery. Let's hope it won't be that long before another one will be written." [laughter] I thought that wasn't bad. He had nothing good to say about the book; it was just terrible from beginning to end.

Lage: What were their criticisms, the people who took that point of view?

Stampp: Oh, it was an abolitionist tract, I was biased, I emphasized nothing but the cruelty of slavery, I exaggerated the cruelty--the book doesn't do that, I don't think it does.

Lage: No, it seems very even-handed, as you look at it in retrospect.

Stampp: No, I don't think it exaggerates the cruelty at all. But these were the sort of gut reactions from most Southerners. By and large, the reviews in Southern newspapers, with a few exceptions, were not good. They were pretty hostile.

Lage: And by this time, we had *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Stampp: That's right.

Lage: And the beginning of the civil rights movement. Perhaps that affected the reviews.

Stampp: Yes. Well, that did, and of course, much of the South was up in arms against the decision. David Donald reviewed it in the *American Historical Review*, and he praised me a little in the first half and then really gave me the works in the second half.

Lage: And was he a Southerner also?

Stamp: David Donald is a Mississippian, and in '56, he taught--he's retired now--he taught at Harvard for quite a while. He taught at Johns Hopkins for a while and taught at Columbia for a while, and I can't remember where he was when he wrote the review, but it was not a nice review, except for the first half. He said something to the effect that it was the most important book on the South-- [looks for review] I'll see if I can find it so I quote it accurately. [moves away from microphone] Can't do it now--

Lage: Is it in one of the revised--?

Stamp: It's on the back of the paperback edition, but I can't seem to find that right now.

Lage: Well, we'll find it.

Stamp: Anyway, he said it was a very important book, and then he got into it. His major criticism was that it was ahistorical, that I was in effect a twentieth-century abolitionist writing an abolitionist tract, and--I won't go into all the detail, but that was the tenor of it.

I don't know whether I told you my major professor wrote a review of it in the *Milwaukee Journal*, my hometown newspaper, of all things, and it was a nasty review.

Lage: Yes, you mentioned that when we were talking about Hesseltine.

Stamp: That really was a nasty review, accusing me of trying to gear the book to win a Pulitzer prize, which was nonsense. He must have been happy that I didn't win it anyway.

Let's see. Then three years later, another book on slavery came out. Stanley Elkins wrote a book on slavery, which he just called *Slavery*. He developed a thesis based on some of the psychological theories of Harry Stack Sullivan and some of the reading that he had done about concentration camps, and he used the German Nazi concentration camps as an analogy to find out what that kind of experience could do to a human being.

##

Lage: What was Elkins' conclusion?

Stamp: He came to the conclusion that the great majority of slaves had internalized the Sambo role, that it was not just plain role-playing at all, that they had indeed become Sambos, and that it was the consequences of the impact of slavery on their personalities.

I waited a long time. It was criticized by many historians, but sociologists loved it and picked it up and thought this was a great piece of history writing. I didn't say anything at all for quite a long time, but finally I was invited to give a lecture, the opening sort of keynote address at a meeting of the Southern Historical Association in 1970. I read a paper called "Rebels and Sambos: the Search for the Negro's Personality in Slavery." [published in *Journal of Southern History*, August 1971] I wrote to Elkins and said, "I'm going to do that, if you'd like to come." Well, he wasn't there.

Lage: Did you know him?

Stampp: Yes, I had run into him several times, and we talked. He said some very rough things about my book, too, that my book really was dictated by U. B. Phillips, my organization was very much like Phillips. Of course it was! I was answering Phillips.

In my paper, I read Harry Stack Sullivan, and I read Freud, and I read a number of other things. I was convinced first of all that he had misrepresented Harry Stack Sullivan. I had quotes from Sullivan which I thought sort of refuted what he was saying and the way he was using Harry Stack Sullivan. Then I got after him on the concentration camp analogy; I thought that was ridiculous because one fundamental difference is that slaves didn't really think that they were going to be killed by their masters, whereas people in concentration camps had really lost hope. They were dying by the millions, and this is not what happened to slaves. And there were lots of other ways in which I thought the concentration camp analogy was just no good. So that was my answer.

Lage: Elkins' interpretation is no longer accepted?

Stampp: I don't think so.

Lage: What was his background? Was he from the North?

Stampp: Yes, he's a Northerner. And incidentally, I think I was one of the first Northerners who wrote a book about the South--about the old South. There were plenty of Northerners who wrote things about the South after the Civil War.

Lage: As you described the reviews, you make the reception of the book seem sort of negative, but wasn't it very welcomed?

Stampp: No, no, it had some very good reviews--C. Vann Woodward's--and it sold reasonably well. In fact, it sold well enough that Knopf wouldn't put it in a paperback. I kept writing to him and saying,

"How about putting it in paper?" He said, "Well, it has a good sale; why should we put it in paperback?" I got impatient with him in the sixties, and I said, "Look, I think you either should put it in a paperback or let someone else put it in a paperback." Finally, I think it was 1965, he put it in a paperback, and that is just when black history was becoming popular, and it was selling 10,000, 15,000 copies a year for a while in the paperback edition.

Lage: Was it used a lot in teaching?

Stampp: It was used in black history courses quite extensively.

Now--just to go along with this--we get to the sixties and black nationalism. Then I got static from another source, not from white Southerners but from black nationalists who in effect were saying, "What do you know about slavery? How can you know anything about slavery?"

I remember attending a conference on slavery at Wayne State University in Detroit in the summer of 1968. I had just come home from Europe and teaching at University of Munich, and I'll go into that later. I was invited to this conference, and there were a number of historians there, black historians and white historians. It was very hot, and there was no air conditioning as I recall where we were meeting.

About fifteen or twenty of us adjourned to a bar nearby where it was cool, air-conditioned, and got into a corner, and the debate went on about what a white man could ever understand about black slavery. I can remember one black student literally pounding my knee like this, saying, "What do you know--" I can't remember exactly, but in effect, "What do you know about this? How do you know about what black people think?" And the only answer I could give is, "There's a lot I don't know, but I do my best, and I could say the same to you. You write about white slaveholders. How do you know about white slaveholders? You're not a white slaveholder. It works both ways."

I eventually extended that and said, "You know, if we accept this, then how can an American write about China, or Japan, or Irishmen about France? If you think about it, how can a twentieth-century man write about seventeenth-century Puritanism, about the Middle Ages, or about ancient history? And if you think about it really carefully, you'll come to the conclusion that the only thing you can write about is autobiography, and that's assuming you can even understand yourself."

That was a problem in the sixties, but it is not any more. The book is still selling, something like 5,000 copies a year in paperback. They're still being used. The South has changed, and Southern historians now accept my book and think it's pretty good stuff. [laughter]

Lage: That's gratifying.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: I understand there's going to be a fortieth anniversary event?

Stampp: Yes. In Little Rock, Arkansas, of all places, next October [1996], the Southern Historical Association is meeting there, and they're going to have one section on *The Peculiar Institution* forty years later. Three papers are going to be read, one by Elizabeth Fox Genovese. That will be interesting--then a black historian, and then a historian from the University of South Carolina. It's quite likely that the man from the University of South Carolina--in fact, I know he's going to praise the book. I don't know what the black historian will do.

Lage: And will you be there?

Stampp: I almost forgot that one of the reviewers of my book in 1957 was Eugene Genovese, writing under a pseudonym in *Science and Society*. This was a time when Genovese was in the Communist party, or had just maybe been kicked out of the Communist party, but it was in that period when he was Marxist. He wrote under the pseudonym, "Della Chiesa." Funny one. You know what that means?

Lage: No.

Stampp: "Della Chiesa," from the church, of all things.

Lage: Oh, my goodness.

Stampp: I had no idea who it was. Actually, it's more interesting than that, because this is the time when the Communist party was sort of opening up to conflicting points of view, and it was reviewed by Gene Genovese, a very, very hostile review, very defensive of U. B. Phillips.

Lage: Defensive of Phillips?

Stampp: Genovese has been one of Phillips' great admirers. Well, think of it from a Marxist point of view. Who are these planters? They're sort of Medieval--I mean, their values are sort of Medieval. They're just playing their historic role, and Phillips knows about

it and understands them. Later on, Genovese said, "Of course, when the Civil War was over, they should have all been lined up and shot," the slaveholders. Well, this is a sort of rash, Marxist approach.

Anyway, he wrote a very critical review, and I believe in the same edition, Herbert Aptheker wrote a very favorable review. So here are two Communists taking opposite positions on the slavery book. [laughs]

Lage: In that same "Rebels and Sambos," didn't you also deal with Herbert Aptheker?

Stamp: I think so, but I really don't remember. I haven't looked at that article for quite a long time.

Lage: I looked at it; it's republished in the collection.

Stamp: Yes, that's right.

Lage: And I think that was the rebel part, perhaps.

Stamp: In my *Imperiled Union* book, it's there.

Reflections on Slave Religion and Culture

Stamp: I should say more than that, and now we can get to the point of how would I change it. I indicated that to some extent in that article. I would have done more with the slave family than I did, and a lot of good stuff has been done on the slave family since my book--in fact, a lot of good stuff has been done on slavery since my book came out.

I can think of one thing in particular that I would have changed, and that is what I wrote about slave religion. What I wrote about slave religion was primarily two aspects: one, religion as a technique of control, the way the masters used religion--be a good servant and your reward will come in heaven. And the other side of it was religion as a vehicle of protest among slaves. There were various signs of protest in many of the slave songs. It was a way of expressing their frustrations and their feelings.

What I didn't write about, and what I would write about at great length if I were doing it over, is Christianity as a source of solace. Christianity probably helped slaves simply get on with

their lives day by day. The faith--even slaveholders conceded that we're all equal in the sight of God, and the virtues of humility, and doing whatever is your lot in life, accepting it. These must have been very comforting thoughts for slaves, it seems to me. They were by and large deeply religious, and they had adopted much of Christianity. They gave their own African twist to it in some ways, in the way they held their services and so on. But that's something I didn't write about, and I certainly would write about it now.

Lage: Well, there have been more use of sources, like the spirituals--looking at the spirituals as a source of--

Stampp: Yes. I used them too.

Lage: You did, you used folklore?

Stampp: Yes, I did folklore and spirituals, but I probably would have wanted to expand all of those because of what Larry Levine has written, and others. I certainly would want to take into account some of the things that Genovese wrote about--relations between masters and slaves.

Lage: What about the issue of how much of African culture was retained? Is that anything you would change?

Stampp: That I'm pretty stubborn on.

Lage: What are your thoughts on that?

Stampp: Well, my generalization is that under slavery, it was very hard for blacks to retain much of their African culture, especially in areas where the slave population was small. Probably in the Gullah districts of South Carolina, the African traditions survived to a much greater extent, that's true. The problem was that slaves didn't have any autonomous organizations. There was no such thing as an autonomous black church in the South. There were no fraternal organizations, there were no cultural organizations.

It seems to me that cultural autonomy only came after emancipation, when blacks began moving out of the white churches into their own churches. To begin with at least, the separation was a voluntary thing on the part of blacks. They just didn't want to be preached to by a white clergyman. They wanted their own churches, and they got them.

Then there were fraternal organizations and other social organizations that could give blacks a feeling of community and a

feeling of identity that they never could have in slavery days. But by that time, much of black culture was lost.

I might qualify a little bit; I said they were existing in a kind of vacuum between two cultures, one of which they were losing and one of which they couldn't really as slaves get the total benefit of--that is, white culture. So they were sort of hanging between them.

I remember a case of a white who had gone to Africa and observed African dances, and came home and tried to teach his slaves African dances, and they were embarrassed and they thought it was funny. What is he trying to do? They thought the dances were funny, according to him, in any case. They laughed.

Lage: Now, is that point of view you've expressed a disputed one now?

Stampp: Well, yes. It certainly was then, and still is. The anthropologist Melville Herskovits, who wrote a book on blacks [*The Myth of the Negro Past*, (New York, 1941)], always insisted that African survivals were significant and--well, that there were lots of them in black culture. I read his book.

Lage: And that was contemporary with yours, or before?

Stampp: Oh, no, that was written back in the 1930s or forties. It was a book I read as part of the background reading I did for my book. I just simply couldn't see it. He was probably the chief exponent of the idea of a very substantial part of the African past surviving in black culture in slavery days and on to the present time.

I should have mentioned the influence of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, (New York, 1941). I read that before I had decided to write a book on slavery, but I found it highly instructive. Myrdal's book helped to build a foundation for my belief that there were no significant emotional or intellectual differences between blacks and whites. I never meant that there were no cultural differences; as a matter of fact, that's one thing that I got attacked for. In my preface, you may have read that I had assumed that innately, there are no significant differences between blacks and white.

Lage: Yes. You said something about "They're white men with black skin."

Stampp: Yes, and I did that deliberately, because that was the criticism that Southerners made of liberal Northerners: "You assume that Negroes are just white men with black skins, and they're not white

men with black skins." So I said, "Okay, I'll take it up and say that." [looking through book]

Lage: It's right on the first page of your preface.

Stampp: Yes. "I have assumed that the slaves were merely ordinary human beings, that innately, Negroes are, after all, only white men with black skins, nothing more, nothing less." [Stanley] Elkins--I think that was rather unscrupulous on his part--quoted that passage but left out "innately," and said, "Stampp assumes that Negroes are, after all, only white men with black skins, and doesn't pay any attention to cultural differences." Then a sociologist picked it up from Elkins and spread it further, that Stampp said they're all alike, culturally.

So finally, I had to write a footnote: "I did not, of course, assume that there had been or are today no cultural differences between white and black Americans," and so on.

Lage: You were talking about physically, genetically--

Stampp: Yes. Their innate characteristics, genetic characteristics. I probably should have made another qualification: I know that blacks and whites have different degrees of susceptibility to malaria and to sickle-cell anemia and so on. Anyway, that was, in my opinion, kind of a silly controversy.

Lage: Did you get heat on that remark from black nationalists also?

Stampp: No, not that I can remember.

Lage: It seems like it would--

Stampp: No, I do not recall their objecting to that.

Lage: They read the "innately" part.

Stampp: They read the "innately" part, yes.

So I think that takes care of *The Peculiar Institution*. Do you want to ask me more questions?

The Morrison Chair, 1957

Lage: Well, not about *The Peculiar Institution*. I was going to ask if the reception it received had any effect on the fact that you got the Morrison chair the next year. How did that come about?

Stampp: Oh, I think so. Oh, yes, I forgot about that. Well, about the Morrison chair: I think I told you that at one point Hicks had a candidate, one of his students.

Lage: We talked about that after we had finished taping.

Stampp: Well, John Hicks had told me shortly after I came here that he was thinking about retirement--he did retire in 1957--that he would like his former student, George Mowry, to replace him. Mowry taught at UCLA for some time and then went to Chapel Hill.

Lage: Is that the way it usually happens, that one chair brings in the next chair?

Stampp: No, he was simply expressing a wish at that time. He didn't say, "I'm going to bring him here." He said, "I would like to see my former student have the chair." I could understand that.

Anyway, the question came up when my slavery book was published. By that time, I had published three books, and I had been told that one, *And the War Came*, had been shortlisted for the Pulitzer prize. Whether you liked *The Peculiar Institution* or not, it was an important book. I remember, I think I said to Carl Bridenbaugh when the question came up, "I don't see why a professor at Berkeley should never be considered for a chair." I think one never had been. They always had brought in someone from the outside.

Lage: I see, so that was the tradition.

Stampp: No one who taught at Berkeley got a chair, to the best of my knowledge, in this department. I said, "I think that I'd like to be considered." I was not saying I should have it, but I would certainly like to have my name on the list. I think that was sort of a surprise. Bridenbaugh, as I remember said, "Well, yes, why not?" And I remember, too, thinking that if they decided they weren't going to consider me for it, I would go somewhere else. I didn't tell anyone that, but I thought, If that's the way it's going to be here, I'll go elsewhere.

Lage: And who makes those decisions?

Stamp: Well, the full professors--not the associates but the full professors this time, I believe, made the decision. It was not, as in the Bridenbaugh case, when Sontag and Hicks and I don't know who else, maybe Kerner, got together and decided to bring Bridenbaugh here without a formal meeting of professors in the department.

Lage: Yes, just the chairs among themselves.

Stamp: Yes. And when I got the chair, which I did in 1957, I was determined--partly because I knew that Henry May was as eligible for it as I was, but I was older and got here a little sooner--that these chairs were not going to have this elevated status any more. And they didn't after that.

Lage: This elevated kind of decision-making.

Stamp: Well, the idea that they were the lords of creation. I didn't think that made sense. They haven't since then, and I think I contributed something to getting that stopped.

Lage: So what are the benefits of the chair? Does it give you a higher salary?

Stamp: It used to, back in the days of Paxson, Hicks, and Sontag. They used to have a considerably higher salary, above-scale salary. That's not so any more. As far as I know, there may well be members in the department without chairs who are paid more than somebody with a chair. The only thing that the chair gave you is a name, a title, and that's nice, I guess, and research money. The chair I held, the Morrison chair--the Margaret Byrne chair, the one that Henry May and Bridenbaugh held, had more money--it paid part of your salary, but it also left money for research.

Lage: You could hire assistants?

Stamp: Yes. I can't remember when it began, but I began getting \$2,000 a year for anything related to teaching or research. I could hire a research assistant, I could use money to go to a convention, that sort of thing.

Lage: Could you travel to research sources?

Stamp: Yes, I could do that too, I could travel to research sources, and it has continued for me since I've retired; I still have \$2,000 a year that I can use. I got my computer, as a matter of fact, on my research money. It helped.

Lage: Oh, good. I didn't realize that benefit continued at retirement.

Stampp: Well, it does. I use it to buy books sometimes. I will certainly use it when I go to Little Rock, Arkansas, next fall, to pay my expenses there.

Lage: Good. Okay, well, we were going to talk about being department chair, but maybe we should save that?

Stampp: I want to say something about going to Munich.

Lage: Okay.

Stampp: In 1957, I had a Fulbright lectureship, and then in 1958, I had an invitation to give the Commonwealth Lectures at the University of London. Then I will get to my acting chairmanship, which I will get through very quickly.

Fulbright Lecturer at the University of Munich, 1957

Stampp: I want to talk about going to Munich. Coming from the background I had--mine was not in an affluent family--and being an American historian and thinking about who went to Europe when I was a kid--it never occurred to me that I would ever go to Europe in my life. That had some impact on my lack of interest in foreign languages. In 1956, I had a letter from Howard K. Beale who was the Fulbright lecturer at the University of Munich in the Amerika Institut.

I had got to know Howard Beale quite well when I taught at University of Maryland because he was working in the Library of Congress. He was on leave from the University of North Carolina. He was a pacifist, a Quaker, an important figure in the American Friends Service Committee, and he was one of the people who was involved in trying to get young Japanese people off the West Coast into jobs.

Lage: I think you might have mentioned him.

Stampp: Yes. We had a Japanese secretary in our department at Maryland, and it was Howard Beale who was responsible for that. Anyway, I had known him for some time, and he was a good friend. He wrote to me and said, "You ought to apply for this job. The Amerika Institut is for American studies. The teaching is in English, and the students in your seminar will write papers in English and so on, so it's something you can do." That's the first time I ever thought about going to Europe.

So I applied and got it. In April 1957, I took my wife and family to Munich.

Lage: They've been taken lots of places so far, different schools and--

Stampp: They've been taken lots of places, right. I agreed to teach only one term, so I went in late April, and I was finished teaching in late July. It was a wonderful experience.

Lage: Did your German background make you feel any connection, or was that too remote?

Stampp: I'll tell you, that was one reason why I was particularly pleased to go to Munich. I was puzzled. One heard all these horrible things about Germans. They didn't sound like the Germans I knew in Milwaukee. I really wanted to go to Germany. I wanted to get to know some German people, as I did, and some German students, and find out. Munich was a wonderful place to go. It's an interesting city. It was still bombed out from the war. The cathedral had no roof on it when I came in '57, and the national theater, the opera house, was just a shambles, just a wreck. The downtown still had lots of one-story temporary buildings, and all over the city, building was going on, apartments were being rebuilt and so on. We lived in an apartment that somehow survived the war; we had a nice apartment.

I found it certainly very broadening. My view of the world I think changed rather considerably as a result of that first trip to Europe. We traveled a lot, we managed to get to Salzburg and Vienna, and one big trip to Italy. Lots of trips around Germany, Switzerland, and eventually we had a big tour of France; we went to England. We bought a car over there, so I had to drive.

Lage: How were your foreign languages?

Stampp: My French is no better than kitchen French and restaurant French, and that's about it. I had no French at all. I learned to read French on my own.

Lage: So you could pass your--

Stampp: So I could pass my French exam.

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Stampp: My parents never tried to teach me German, but I learned a little as a child, just hearing them. My sister and I used to try to break their code by learning what they were saying. I picked it

up fairly well in Germany that time, but I did lecture in English, and my seminar was in English.

It was very interesting that the first year I was there, in '57--I went back twice after that--I had about eighteen students in my lectures. I found it very hard to get them to talk about things. They really were very subdued. I remember one time saying, "Look, I've been talking to you for a long time. Surely you must be reacting somehow to these things." I remember one student raised his hand and said, "Tell us about the Panama Canal," which was one of the not admirable episodes in American history, but he finally said, in effect, "You're not perfect either." [laughter] "Tell us about the Panama Canal."

Lage: We would have a lot to tell them about where we weren't perfect.

Stamp: Yes. So I told them about the Panama Canal, the whole sordid story about how we got Panama.

Then I met a student whose father was a professor of philosophy at one of the German universities, I can't remember at the moment which one. I got to know him very well. He had been living in Stuttgart during the war, and without any emotion or bitterness or anything, he said, "I finally had to be moved out because the bombers were coming day and night, so I was moved out of Stuttgart." He was very much interested in American culture, and eventually he came to the United States and got a job teaching European history in some school in the Midwest. I found it interesting.

Finally the students broke down near the end and invited me to a party they gave, where we had beer and popcorn. I thought this was about as American as you could get--the popcorn, anyway--and that was a nice, easy, relaxed evening.

Lage: Didn't they have a different relationship with professors, perhaps, than we do?

Stamp: Oh, very different. I can tell you that at the University of Munich, there was one professor of modern history, one professor. His name was Schnable. He had a so-called seminar with eighty students in it, if you can imagine a seminar with that many, and the students were terrified of this man. I remember one student saying, "His voice doesn't carry very far, and I can't hear him in the back." I said, "Well, why don't you tell him you can't hear him?" He didn't have the courage to do that.

That was my impression--a very subdued group of students. Very different ten years later, eleven years later, when I went

back. These were students who had got their bearings and were not being intimidated any more by an American professor.

The travel was wonderful and getting to know some German people as we did on a social basis, so we could talk about things.

Lage: Were they willing to talk about the war and the Jewish question?

Stamp: Yes. You would have to get to know them fairly well. There was one couple in particular that we got to know very well, so that they would come over and sit, and we would drink a glass or a bottle of wine at night together and talk. Her brother, the brother of the wife, had been in the German Army during the war, and I would suppose that he was a pro-Nazi. After the war, he committed suicide. I met their mother too, a lovely lady, who probably was not a Nazi.

The daughter was interesting, too, because she was a teenager during the immediate postwar period. She told me of some pretty awful things about how she survived in these postwar years, and her relations with Americans in Munich and so on.

So it was a wonderful experience, it really was.

Lage: Very good. And it was only the first trip.

Stamp: That was the first trip. I went back again in 1968 and then again in 1972, and that was a very different experience. There were student rebels in '68.

Lage: Shall we deal with that after we talk about our own student rebels? [laughter]

Stamp: Oh, I think so. We've got to wait--we're going to get to our student rebels next time. I've got through Munich, I don't need to say much more.

Then I got the invitation to give the Commonwealth lectures at the University of London in '60, and at that time, I was acting chairman. Then I got the Harmsworth professorship at Oxford in 1961-'62, and it was after I came back that things broke out in Berkeley.

Lage: So we'll start with that next time, and then we'll get into the sixties in Berkeley.

Commonwealth Funds Lectures, University of London, 1960

[Interview 7: May 28, 1996] ##

- Lage: Today is May 28, 1996, and we're on our seventh session with Ken Stamp. Last time, we left you in Munich, or getting home from Munich and the Fulbright lectureship. We're going to start with another international trip.
- Stamp: Yes. After I finished in Munich, I took my family on a tour. Did I talk about that? We toured France and Belgium and the Netherlands and England.
- Lage: Right, and your first European experience.
- Stamp: Then, suddenly, another invitation to go to Europe came in rather quickly. In 1958, I was invited to come in January, 1960, to give the Commonwealth Funds lectures at the University of London, at University College, London. I agreed to do that. I was to give seven lectures. I decided to give them on Reconstruction, the post-Civil War Reconstruction period.
- Lage: Did they make a request at all on topic?
- Stamp: No, I could lecture on anything, and this is what I chose to lecture on. I prepared the lectures in 1959. I must have started early in 1959. The lectures really grew out of the lectures I was giving in Berkeley to my upper division course in the old South and the Civil War and Reconstruction period. I had them all prepared before I went to London. I was to be there from mid-January to mid-February. I remember preparing them in the summer of 1959. Dick Hofstadter was here, and he was living with us. It was a nice time. It was a nice summer, and I was working in my study which opened onto a patio where Hofstadter was out reading. I can't remember why he was here, he must have been giving some lectures somewhere. Anyway, it was a nice time.
- Lage: Was there interchange on those lectures?
- Stamp: Oh, I kept going out and reading bits to him that I liked, and he liked.

Acting Chairman in a Growing Department, 1959-60

Stampp: Then in the spring of 1959, Delmer Brown, who was chairman--I was vice chairman--told me that he was going to take off for Japan in the summer of 1959, and I suddenly found myself acting chairman of the History Department, which was something I had not anticipated.

Lage: So Delmer's trip wasn't something very long planned, it sounds like.

Stampp: It might have been planned earlier than that. In any case, I certainly knew by the spring of '59 that I was going to have to be acting chairman the next year. And so from July 1, 1959, to July 1, 1960, I was acting chairman of the History Department.

It was an exciting year, because the History Department was still growing. It was during that year, '59-'60, that we completed negotiations with Richard Herr to come in the fall of 1960, and also Carl Schorske came up and gave a stunning lecture on Vienna at the turn of the century. We invited him to come. Henry May had been much interested in Carl Schorske for a long time, had known him, and we had a meeting and voted to invite Carl Schorske, and he came.

Lage: Does the department chairman have a stronger voice than other members?

Stampp: No, the chairman presides at tenure committee meetings, but he has one vote, and he can talk, but that's all. I suppose if he wants to throw his weight around or to be mean or something, he would be able to do that. I know that Delmer didn't do that, and I certainly didn't do that. I simply presided.

Then the same year, Hans Rosenberg--I can't remember whether he was at the center at Stanford, but he was out here in any case --he came and talked. We had a new chair, and we offered the chair to Hans Rosenberg, and he came. So all of that in one year. I just happened to be chairman, but these were three major appointments. I think Dick Herr was brought in as an associate professor, and Schorske as a full professor, and Hans Rosenberg the holder of a new chair in the department. So in that sense, it was an exciting year.

Hans Rosenberg, Carl Schorske

Lage: Was there anything controversial about the three of those?

Stamp: I can't remember any controversy at all. I think they were all brought in unanimously. I don't remember any trouble at all.

Lage: Things seem to have been resolved, in some ways.

Stamp: Right. Well, they both were distinguished people. Hans Rosenberg had been teaching at Brooklyn College for years before he came here and had trained a lot of bright undergrads who had gone off to graduate school and were distinguished people in the profession by that time. Many of them remembered Hans Rosenberg as the man who inspired them to go on to graduate work. Hans turned out to be a very, very important, solid member of the department. His judgments were very good, and he was very conscientious, and he read the writings of his colleagues, and very soon became really a crucial member of the department until his retirement.

Lage: Those are things you don't know when you're hiring someone, most often.

Stamp: No, but he had such a long record of teaching and scholarship. He was a distinguished scholar before he came.

Schorske was a little less that. He had published his doctoral dissertation, which was very good, and he was to publish a big book on Vienna, the cultural and intellectual history of Vienna at the turn of the century. Carl was slow, and as a matter of fact, he never did write that book. He wrote lots of articles, and he brought together the articles in a book. He was a brilliant teacher, brilliant lecturer, so he was a good addition to the department.

Lage: He got involved in campus life also, it seems to me.

Stamp: He got involved in campus life, that's right, very much a sympathizer of the FSM.

During the year, it was a terribly busy year for me, because in addition to being acting chairman, I was writing these lectures. In the middle of it I went off for four weeks, from mid-January to mid-February, to give the lectures in London.

There was another case of someone whom we were going to bring in in European history, and that one was controversial. By a split vote--Stanley Mellon his name was--by a split vote, the

department did vote to bring in Stanley Mellon. The case then went to the administration, to the dean who then submits it to the budget committee of the university, and the action was taken while I was in London. One of the people who was very strongly opposed to bringing in Stanley Mellon was Ray Sontag, and I think that Sontag probably spoke to the dean and whoever else he knew he could speak to. I heard while I was in London that the administration had turned down the Mellon appointment, and I was furious.

Lage: Was it the administration or the budget committee?

Stamp: It ultimately was the budget committee, I'm not sure, but in any case, it was turned down. I was in London, and I was furious. I had a phone call from Nick Riasanovsky, who I think was vice chairman that year, acting vice chairman, and I remember being so angry that day that I went on a long walk in London, went to St. Paul's church and spent time in St. Paul's cooling off. I finally went back and thought, well, maybe I could resign as acting chairman, but I thought better of that and didn't do it.

Lage: Do you think if you had been on the scene, it might have gone differently, or was it just one of those things?

Stamp: I don't know. I didn't have the power that Ray Sontag did in administration circles, I know that. In any case, Stanley Mellon didn't in the long run, I must say, turn out to be quite the scholar we expected him to be, and perhaps Ray Sontag was right; but at this time, he looked good. He was here, he was teaching here, and he looked very good.

Lage: He was a visiting professor?

Stamp: Yes, or associate, or whatever.

Lage: Do you know what the objections turned on? Was it his scholarship, or something else?

Stamp: Presumably it would be his scholarship. His private life was a little up and down, and some people might have had objection to him on that score. In retrospect, I don't feel that we suffered a great loss when he didn't come, but it didn't look to me, and to lots of others, didn't look that way at the time. One can make mistakes.

My year as acting chairman was probably--I think it was an ordinary year. In the fall, I was still writing these lectures for the University of London, so I had a schedule which put me on campus and in the chairman's office Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

On Tuesday and Thursday, I did not go on campus. I remember one of my colleagues being very indignant about my not being there on a Tuesday and a funny remark he made. He came into the chairman's office and asked the secretary where I was, and she said, "Well, he's not on campus on Tuesdays," and he said, "That's why we're falling behind the Russians." [laughter]

Lage: That's wonderful.

Stampp: Anyway, I just felt I had to do it that way in order to get these lectures finished.

My feeling about being chairman--I think almost any person who has been chairman--was that one got to know more about one's colleagues than one really wanted to know. The chairman hears all the gripes and rivalries. I'm not going to mention any names--there were two historians in the same field of interest who would come in to me regularly. They were there every week, each criticizing the other for certain inadequacies.

Lage: In their academics?

Stampp: In their academics, in their background and their training. First I would hear one, and then I would hear the other. They both had tenure, and there was no point to all this. It was enough to make me decide that I didn't want to be chairman again. I didn't think I was cut out to be a chairman for three years.

Lage: That was the usual term?

Stampp: I was asked later, and I said no, and I guess I was sort of shirking as a result.

Lage: Was it more that kind of not wanting to get into the personal aspects of it all, or was it a drain on your scholarship?

Stampp: Well, it was partly both, and in fact a selfish decision on my part. I was asked again to be chairman, and I said, "No, I've done it once. I've been the vice chairman for years," under Delmer Brown, and I think George Guttridge, and Jim King; when Carl Schorske became chairman in 1962, I was vice chairman for him.

Lage: He became chairman rather quickly.

Stampp: Yes, he came in '60, and in the fall of '62 he took over the chairmanship of the department. So that was the end of my career as a department chairman.

Now, in London--I had four wonderful weeks there. I had all my lectures prepared, and I delivered my lectures at five in the afternoon. So I had the whole day to explore London, and I did, took full advantage of the theater; I was at the theater fourteen nights out of the twenty-eight I was there, the ballet or the opera or the theater. So that was great. I was there alone, incidentally, and stayed in a hotel, moderately priced hotel.

VI CHANGES IN THE FAMILY AND TEACHING IN ENGLAND, 1960-1962

Stamp: Some time before that, in 1959 again probably, I had an invitation to be Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford in 1961-1962. I know I had it by the time I was in London in January-February, because I went up to Oxford and talked with the incumbent Harmsworth Professor about housing and what it was like, so I had spent a day in Oxford at that time.

Lage: Would these invitations come on the strength of your *Peculiar Institution* book?

Stamp: I don't know. At that time at Oxford, there was a special field in American history, but the field was defined as "slavery and secession: 1848 to 1862." The dates made no sense at all, and one was supposed to lecture on the background of the Civil War and the Civil War, but stop apparently in the middle of the Civil War, 1862, which made no sense. But that's the way the field was defined.

That was all the American history that was taught at Oxford at that time, and that had been introduced way back in the 1920s. I think the first Harmsworth Professor was Samuel Eliot Morison, and a lot of distinguished historians had it after that.

So I had accepted the invitation to come, and I was to get there in September of 1961. My intention at that time was to bring my children and my wife. When I was in Oxford in 1960, I was looking for a school for my daughter, and I found a school where she could go.

Something else happened that year, 1960, early in the spring, it must have been March. I was a member of the nominating committee of the American Historical Association, and we had a meeting in Washington. It was that committee that decided to nominate Carl Bridenbaugh as president of the American Historical Association, and he would become vice president, I think, in 1961

--I may be off a year on these dates--and then he would become president in 1962. That meant his presidential address would be at the meeting in December--it must have been 1962.

Lage: Was that something you supported, then, being on the nominating committee?

Stampp: Yes. I think that I put in his name for it.

A Marriage Ends

Stampp: Now, I'm coming to the summer of 1960. I am going to leave some things out, private things, but that's when my marriage broke up. My wife and I separated on September 1, 1960, and that changed my plans for '61-'62, because that meant she was not coming with me to Oxford. I tried to persuade my children to come with me, but they decided not to.

Lage: They were fairly young still, weren't they?

Stampp: Well, they were eighteen and fifteen. My son was eighteen and my daughter was fifteen by then, so they weren't that young. My son was finishing high school.

Anyway, I moved into an apartment in Berkeley for the year September '60 to August '61.

Lage: Was divorce less common in academic circles then than it was later?

Stampp: There had been divorces on the Berkeley faculty, and some of them were rather sensational ones in one way or another, but there hadn't been a divorce in the History Department until way back in the 1930s. The only one I knew about was--actually, I think he ultimately became a member of the department, but I think he was a graduate student at the time of his divorce.

So it was not the way a divorce would be handled or treated in the department today. I'm not going to talk about it very much, but I did have a lot of trouble with some colleagues over the divorce.

Lage: Really? Disapproving of this?

Stampp: Yes. I lost several friends as a result of the separation and divorce, and I had to talk to a couple of them. I remember one,

who was in Paris that year, wrote a letter and told me that I owed it to my friends to explain this extraordinary thing. I wrote back and said I'm not going to do any explaining.

Now, one other thing that came up during the year of my chairmanship that I should mention, and that is we had a young assistant professor in the department named Richard Drinnon. I got to know him very well, I liked him very much, he was a very good teacher, I thought. He was an anarchist, he was an intellectual anarchist, and just as harmless as anyone could be.

Lage: What was his field?

Stampp: American history. I'm trying to remember what field he actually gave his lectures in. I can't remember. It might have been recent American history at that time; probably was. He had written a biography of Emma Goldman, the famous anarchist, which I thought was quite good. He came up for tenure the year that I was chairman, and this was very painful to me. I presided, and the vote of the department--I can't remember what the vote was--but the majority voted against giving him tenure. I have no idea to what degree his political orientation had something to do with it. I'm sure it didn't in most cases, but they were dubious about his scholarship.

He was very, as you could imagine, very popular with radical students on campus, and they made a fuss about it. Dick didn't make a fuss about it. I had the job of going to Dick and telling him that he was not going to be promoted, and it made me very unhappy. That was a great disappointment to me that year.

Lage: Did you feel that his scholarship was borderline?

Stampp: I thought it was good enough to get tenure. I suppose, once again in retrospect, he didn't turn out to be one of the great scholars even in the context of his political orientation. He went off and taught at a small college in Pennsylvania and had a good career there, and I saw him occasionally. Incidentally, the year of my separation from my wife--the divorce didn't come through until a year later--I spent a lot of time with the Drinnons. This was one couple that--maybe they didn't know my first wife--I felt very comfortable with, so I saw a great deal of them. I was there a lot.

Collaborating on an American History Textbook

Stamp: During the year '60-'61, while I was living in my apartment, I think I had a sabbatical in the spring term. I stayed here. By that time--I have to back up a bit--I had agreed with some reluctance to be a collaborator in a textbook, an American history textbook. I had decided several years earlier. I had been asked by Knopf to join three of my friends, Frank Freidel, T. Harry Williams, and Dick Current, in writing a textbook, and I thought I had made the decision for good--I said no.

Lage: This would have been for high school, or college?

Stamp: No, this was a college textbook. It's up on the shelf here. I'll say a little bit about it. This is probably the time to bring it up, though, because in 1958, Harcourt Brace got the idea of asking six historians, C. Vann Woodward, Ed Morgan, Bruce Catton, John Blum--Morgan, Blum, and Woodward were all at Yale, and Bruce Catton was the editor of the *American Heritage*--Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and me to consider doing a one-volume textbook. The other one (with Current, Williams, and Freidel) was to be a two-volume textbook, which meant I would have had to write half a book. In this one I would write six chapters--that wasn't quite the responsibility, and it wouldn't take that much time.

Anyway, the man at Harcourt Brace who was trying to promote this was very clever. He invited us all to come to New York, and put us up at the Yale Club, took us to the theater, wined and dined us, and somehow left each one of us--we found in later years as we were thinking back--with the question: "How did we get into this?" None of us regrets it, I can tell you, but how did he do it? What he did was somehow convey the impression that the other five were ready to go, but they're waiting on you, and each one of us had the same feeling. [laughter]

Lage: So he was a good negotiator, or deal-maker.

Stamp: Yes. So in the end, we agreed to do it. So the year I was in the apartment alone, I was working on the textbook. By the time I went off to Oxford in the fall of '61, I had all but the last chapter of the textbook--I had six chapters, and I had five of them written. Writing a textbook, I can tell you, is real drudgery.

Lage: Were you doing it on the Civil War and--

Stamp: No, I did the period from the election of Jefferson in 1800 to the 1850s. My last chapter was kind of a social-economic history of

the United States in the 1850s. Then Bruce Catton, the man of the Civil War, took up the fifties and wrote one chapter on the background to the Civil War, another chapter on the Civil War, and then another chapter on Reconstruction. C. Vann Woodward took up there, from the end of Reconstruction to the end of the nineteenth century, and then John Blum and Schlesinger wrote the twentieth century. Ed Morgan, of course, did the colonial period and the Revolution.

The text turned out to be a big success. It had a big sale, it went through eight editions. It ultimately boiled down to having to do a new edition every four years, and you can almost trace the evolution of historical thinking about women, about blacks, about Chicanos, about Hispanics, from the different editions in this text, because each time, it seemed there was some part of our vocabulary that we had to change: Negroes became blacks and then became African Americans, and no longer could we refer to a ship as feminine or a country as feminine, all that was out.

Lage: Did this come down from the publisher, or your own--?

Stampp: Well, the publisher--it was both. The publisher got the static from prospective users, and the users got it from the students or student groups, but in any case, the vocabulary changed rather considerably.

What you tend to do from one edition to another in a textbook is keep adding things. You think of something else that should get in. So this book was growing and growing, bigger and bigger. Finally, I think it must have been about the sixth edition, the publisher said, "Look, this book is getting oversized, and we really must do some cutting." So in that edition, I remember my big task was simply finding things I could cut out. That was painful.

We got the eighth edition out in 1994--

Lage: Oh, my. It's really gone on.

Stampp: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., did the late 20th century. He's the one who had to keep bringing it up to date and keep adding another presidential election to it.

Bruce Catton dropped out first.

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Stamp: Each new edition brought us together. We would meet somewhere, in Washington or New York, usually in New York, to talk it over. Obviously, the three at Yale saw each other a great deal, but I didn't see them except at conventions.

So I had about decided that I was not going to contribute to the next edition. I was tired of that; I was retired. Arthur Schlesinger had dropped out by that time. Then a letter came from Harcourt Brace saying that they had decided not to do another edition. So it's in its last edition. It's still selling.

Lage: It's a lot of staying power, though, when you think how long that was revised.

Stamp: Yes. It came out in 1962, late 1962, and it's still available and it's still being used, I know from the report I got last month that it was still being used, and the royalties still come in.

Lage: So you were glad you did it.

Stamp: It helped my standard of living. [laughter]

Lage: That's very nice.

Stamp: Yes.

Lage: Was it very much used on the Berkeley campus?

Stamp: I don't know that it was ever used on the Berkeley campus. By that time, I had quit teaching History 17A/B--wait, I think it was once or twice used on the Berkeley campus. Then when Win Jordan and Leon Litwack took over, the Hofstadter-Current-Miller textbook was used. I don't know what textbook they use now.

Lage: They probably change it every year so the students can't sell their used books. [laughs]

Stamp: Well, every four years. That's one reason. But the text begins to look old hat if the last presidential election isn't in it. I remember that ships became neuter instead of feminine. I thought that was rather sad. I thought when I wrote about the beautiful clipper ships, to refer to them as feminine was--

Lage: I hadn't realized that was part of the trend.

Stamp: Oh, yes. You could no longer talk about Britain as "she," or France as "her." So that had to change. We had to bring in more --and this was all to the good--more material on women's history, more material on American Indian history and on Hispanic history,

more on black history than we had to begin with. So I think the text was getting better and better as we went along.

Lage: Now, you always hear of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., as being kind of on the barricades against overemphasis on multiculturalism or political correctness. Did any of this come out in the book?

Stamp: No, and the interesting thing about Arthur is he's very partisan. He was an advisor to Jack Kennedy, and certainly a prominent and articulate Democrat, but the astonishing thing is that he wrote very detached, analytical chapters. You don't get any of Schlesinger the partisan in his chapters. He did have a way of turning that off when he was writing about it. I thought his chapters were very good, and he was probably the fastest writer of all of us. Most of the rest of us labored over it a good deal more.

Lage: You were a busy man in those years, it sounds like.

Stamp: Well, yes. Those were busy years. Very good years, too.

Harmsworth Professor at Oxford, 1961-62

Stamp: So I think we've come now to my going to Oxford.

Lage: Yes. Let's talk about that.

Stamp: All right. I had a wonderful trip over. I got a Fulbright grant for my travel expenses. The Harmsworth professorship didn't pay transportation. I decided I was going to go by ship. I decided to take the *Queen Mary*. I had received from the Fulbright Commission a grant to pay second class over. I was appalled to find out in August that to go second class alone meant that you probably would have to share a room with one or two other men, and that didn't appeal to me--two strangers on the ship.

Lage: In a tiny room.

Stamp: Yes. But things were slow, I guess, in late September, and I talked to the man at the British agency in New York about this, and he said, "Well, I'll tell you. If you're willing to pay \$110 more, I'll put you in a first-class cabin." It was spacious enough for three, "but I guarantee that you'll have it alone." So that seemed to me a pretty good deal.

I had a marvelous trip over. It takes five days, and things are very formal in first class. You have to wear a tux for dinner, but it was great. It was a real taste of luxury.

The salary that Oxford paid to the Harmsworth professor was not very much; it was 2,500 pounds a year. That was not going to take care of my expenses. I still had to maintain a family over here and support two children, and make various payments to my wife. Our divorce, by the way, went through in June of 1961, though in those days, you had to wait a year for the final paper, and that came in June 1962.

Life in Queens College

Stamp: I stayed in London the first couple of days after I arrived and went to Oxford around the first of October. Before I got there--this was a surprise to them, too--I told them that, "I'm coming alone, and rather than living somewhere in some house, I would like to live in college." I must say, they gave me some beautiful accommodations. I lived in Queens College in the back quad on the second floor. I had one room that I did my work in and had my breakfast in. I had a big living room with a fireplace. I had a bedroom, and my own bath, and I had a scout, that's what they're called there. He's the man who looked after me.

Lage: A valet?

Stamp: Well, I can tell you what he did. He asked me what time I wanted to get up in the morning, and I told him, and he would come and wake me at that time. Then he would go in and turn on the bath for me, and pick up laundry, and take it out, and if I needed postage stamps or cigarettes--I was a smoker at that point--or sherry or whatever, he would bring it to me. I paid for these things, mind you, but it was all brought to me. Then I had my bath and dressed, and he would bring my breakfast.

Lage: Was this hard to get used to, or does one fall into it easily?

Stamp: Well, I'll tell you, you find it fairly--first you're self-conscious about it. You're not used to something. Then he makes my bed and cleans my apartment--

Lage: Better than a wife.

Stamp: Oh, my goodness. [laughter] Well, hadn't thought about that. I'm not sure. It's very easy to get used to, and this I began to

realize--because there were other unmarried fellows living in college--it turns you into kind of a helpless baby. Everything is done for you.

Lage: So different from living in your apartment on Francisco, I'm sure.

Stampp: Oh, my, I should say. It was a beautiful location. I was on the back quad, and across from my rooms I could see the Queens College Library which is one of the most beautiful rooms in all of Oxford. Queens College was built in the late seventeenth--it goes back to the fourteenth century, but the Medieval buildings were torn down, and they rebuilt the whole college in the late seventeenth century, so it's this wonderful Baroque architecture.

On the other side, I could look--this sounds a little morbid, but it was beautiful--onto a small old graveyard, and I can remember looking out in the winter when the grass and the bushes were covered with hoarfrost, and it was all white. It was just a lovely view.

Fellows living in college and fellows living out of college frequently gave little parties, not dinner parties, but evening parties, wine and cheese, talk. So a couple of times, I had to give parties in my room, and again, I was the gracious host. My scout and his son came in and took over. They brought in the hors d'oeuvres and the wine and then afterward cleaned up.

Lage: Were these other fellows?

Stampp: Oh, yes, fellows, mostly in Queens College that I knew, but--no. I got to know fellows at several other colleges as well, and I invited them as well.

I once gave a small dinner party. Dick Drinnon was actually teaching that year at the University of Leeds, and I went up one time to visit him there, then I invited him to come down, and he came down with his wife. I had a dinner party and had a private room in Queens College, and I invited two other couples, both of whom were interested in American history. They brought all the college silver in, and it was a very elegant dinner. You get a bill for it at the end of the month, but it was very nice.

Living in college was an interesting experience. It's not easy for an American--at least, it wasn't for me--to get used to the kind of conversation that went on at high table, because there are unwritten rules. You never talk about your work. The worst thing to do would be to turn to someone and say, "And what are you doing your research on?" or something like that. You just don't do that. And there is a kind of wit and humor and banter that

goes on that is rather different from the kind that I was used to in Berkeley, which I thought I managed fairly well. So you did feel a bit of a stranger.

In 1961-'62, there were lots of scholars in Britain who didn't really think there was such a thing as American history. That's the recent past. So I had to put up with a certain amount of that in college and elsewhere.

Lage: Just sort of the witty remark, or an actual engagement?

Stampp: Oh, they had a way of letting you know that American history-- sometimes it was kind of crude. Somebody would say, "What American history? I didn't know there was such a thing as American history." That sort of thing.

There was a Scot named MacDonald who really hated Americans. Every Harmsworth professor would warn the next one, "Beware of MacDonald." He wasn't happy until he had insulted the Harmsworth professor, and he didn't waste much time in doing it. In fact, he did it several times.

I remember one time in the fall, MacDonald turned to me. After dinner, you go up to the common rooms of the college and drink port or Madeira and eat walnuts and pears. I remember MacDonald turning to me and saying, "Stampp, what do you think of Castro in Cuba?" Castro had just recently got in. When I have a question like that thrown at me, I tend to think about it. I started thinking about what had gone on in Cuba and the brutal dictatorship that was there before, I said, "Well, I have rather mixed feelings about it." He turned to his neighbor on the other side and he said, "Stampp doesn't know what he thinks about Cuba. What do you think about Cuba?" It was that sort of thing.

There were two or three fellows at Queens who could abide MacDonald, but few liked him, and few wanted to sit next to him at table, because he was such a disagreeable man. He drank too much, and he sometimes came half-plastered, I think. So the fellows used to line up at the big fireplace in the dining room where the students ate, and we had a high table. You could sort of maneuver to sit around or near someone that you wanted to sit with, and everyone maneuvered not to sit next to MacDonald. I got to be pretty good at that, too.

I remember one time I had out-manuevered an Egyptologist so that he was going to have to sit next to MacDonald, and he grabbed me by the arm and pulled me over and said, "You sit next to him. You're here for only one year. I spend my whole life here." [laughter]

Lage: It sounds quite disagreeable!

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: This was every night, I assume?

Stampp: Every night, yes.

Lage: Did this get a little tiresome, the social scene? Being a nightly occurrence.

Stampp: Well, it was every noon as well as every night. I could have lunch at college, and I could have dinner at college, and since I was unattached, I ate there fairly steadily. Every now and then, I would take a break and go out. I met a young woman--nothing serious--but we became good friends, and I took her out to dinner a number of times. That's a nice break. It was a wonderful experience, but I would say that it was hard to break into the life of a college that way. It would have been easier, I suppose, if I had lived with my family in a house.

Lage: But you wouldn't have had the total experience either.

Stampp: That's right.

I was invited to have dinner at various other colleges, and that was nice--University College, and somebody I got to know fairly well at All Souls College, and I had dinner there. That's the college without students. And Keeble College, Jesus College, and a number of others.

Lecturing, Friends, and Travel

Stampp: My lectures apparently were very successful. I had about forty-five students, and these were all students who were going to offer American history as a special field when they took their exams at the end of their third year.

Lage: So you actually had students signed up with you, not just people who happened to come?

Stampp: No, these students came voluntarily. I gave no exams, they wrote no papers. I lectured to them on slavery and secession, 1848-1862. I warned them that I was going to take a long running jump into 1848, which meant I was going to go back further, and I

didn't promise that I would end at '62. I said, "You'll never know how the war came out if I stop there."

My lectures were a success. The students tended in many lecture courses to sort of disappear. Mine stuck to the end, and some of my colleagues at Queens were rather astonished that I kept these students attending.

The interesting thing about the students I had--this is 1961-'62--they were conservative students who were interested in American history, Tories. I think most of the left-wing students didn't like the United States very much. This was the Cold War. In any case, there was a very substantial contingent among these forty-four, forty-five students who were very conservative. One time in December, the conservative students whom I got to know fairly well invited me to a dinner of some society which was very conservative. It was an annual dinner, and we first met and had sherry at Christ Church College, which is one of the more conservative colleges, I think, and then had dinner in a restaurant in a private room upstairs.

I was asked to respond to the toast to the visitors. I was a guest, and there were several others, and I was asked to be the one to respond. There were lots of distinguished historians there. It was a fine dinner, and I didn't know what I should say.

So I finally got up and said something about the United States being a very conservative country politically. I said, "Actually, you could travel from New York to San Francisco and never meet a socialist. So you will understand the irony of your inviting me to respond, one of the few socialists in the United States." [laughter]

Lage: Did they realize?

Stampp: No, they didn't realize, and it was in a way a foul trick on the young man who invited me, because he was a conservative among conservatives, and his friends really teased him about picking a socialist. [laughter]

Lage: Well, that must have been kind of a fun thing for you.

Stampp: Yes, that was a fun thing.

In college, I did have several very good friends. One was Henry Pelling, who was interested in nineteenth century British history but also very much interested in American history. He even wrote a little book on the history of American labor. He was

a bachelor, and he and I spent a lot of time together. We went for walks together, and we played chess together.

Another bachelor friend was named Bill Calder whose field was German literature, and another one was the college organist--a very good organist. I frequently went to listen to him practice in the Queens Chapel. So I did have some good friends there, and several of them outside.

The college I enjoyed going to most was Nuffield. That was one of the newest colleges--it was particularly good in political science, history, philosophy. There was one degree there called PPE, which is philosophy, political science, and economics--not history, economics. One reason I liked going there is that--well, there was a different atmosphere and a different spirit there, and Americans would feel more comfortable there than anywhere else. The great thing was it had central heating. [laughter] At dinnertime, you felt warm.

So that brings me really to the end of the first term. In addition to my lectures, I ran a seminar with Henry Pelling, and then the second term I ran another one with Herbert Nicholas, who was in political science. The students wrote papers, and my, what a change from Berkeley. These men and women--I had some women in my classes, too--they could write. I never had to worry about their prose. They turned in well-written and thoughtful papers.

I also agreed that--I didn't have to do this--but I agreed to give tutorials to several students, which meant that they would meet with me individually. They would come and read papers, and I would read them, and we would talk them over. That was wonderful teaching.

There were six weeks, I think, between the fall term and the winter term, from mid-December until late January. My plan was to spend at least three weeks of it in Florence. I thought, here's my chance to live in Florence. Well, December was a bitterly cold month in England, and I had trouble keeping warm. I was writing my last textbook chapter, and I can remember sitting in my room, the room I had breakfast in, but also it's the room I worked in; I had my books there and my typewriter. I had a gas fire on, and I can remember sitting at my typewriter in December with my overcoat on and a blanket over my knees and trying to type, and every now and then going over and warming my fingers at the fireplace because it was so cold.

I had made arrangements with a local travel agency to fly to Florence and for a hotel accommodation. I went back to him in mid-December and said, "Look. I want to go to somewhere where

it's warm, and forget about museums, forget about art galleries. I just want to be warm." He said, "Well, probably Torremolinos in Spain, on the Mediterranean, is good." Torremolinos at that time was a little fishing village. It wasn't the big resort it is now.

So I agreed to go there. I remember I went down to London for Christmas, and Henry Pelling was there also. We stayed at different hotels, but we had Christmas dinner together. We were in a restaurant where it was terribly cold. We had a bottle of red wine, and I remember we sipped it, and I said, "This is cold, ice cold." Henry said, "Well, it's room temperature." [laughter] Then Christmas Day, Henry and I went for a walk in London.

Then I went back to Oxford after Christmas and finished the last bit of the last chapter of the textbook and got a typist, and she typed it up. She turned it back to me, and I found that she had changed all my spellings to the British way. So color was "colour" and so on. I had to go through the whole manuscript and correct all these changes.

I put the manuscript in the mail, and the next day got on the plane for Gibraltar. I arrived in Gibraltar on the thirtieth of December and then had to take a bus from Gibraltar to Torremolinos, which means crossing the frontier from Gibraltar into Spain. I remember my daughter writing me a letter chiding me for going to Spain, because I had said I would never set foot in Spain until Franco was gone. She said something unpleasant about, "Your principles give way when you get cold."

Lage: Because she didn't know how cold it was.

Stampp: Well, that's right.

Anyway, we got to the frontier, and the customs man was there, and I had two suitcases. He took the little one, he opened it and closed it again. He said, "Now you pay me a tip." I said, "I've never paid a tip going across a frontier. What do you mean, pay you a tip?" He said, "You want me to go through both of your suitcases from top to bottom, take everything out of them?" So I paid him a tip.

Lage: So much for Franco.

Stampp: I went to Torremolinos, where I had a hotel reservation. The rate at the hotel was so low that I thought, this must be a crummy place and certainly no private bath. Well, it turned out to be a very nice modern hotel. It was forty-two dollars a week for dinner, breakfast, and room. At the desk, I said, "I want you to know that I asked for a room with a private bath." He said, "Sir,

all our rooms have private baths." They were elegant rooms, with a balcony overlooking the Mediterranean. I spent three weeks there and got warm.

Lage: Was it warm?

Stamp: Oh, it was warm, it was wonderful. I could walk around in my shirtsleeves on the beach. I spent a lot of time in Malaga and crossed the mountains to see the Alhambra. That was a lovely break.

Then I went back to Oxford and found that people's water pipes had been frozen all over because of the cold. People had water pipes running down the outside of their houses, breaking. I remember one man at Queens who had married recently coming to me and saying, "Would you mind while you're gone if my wife took baths in your rooms?" I said, "No." It was so cold.

Marriage to Isabel

Stamp: The next term started out pretty much the way the first term did. I was lecturing again the second term. February dragged on, it was cold and not very good weather. Henry Pelling and I kept playing chess.

I was invited to a dinner party on the third of March by someone named Alec Campbell, who was at Keeble College and who was interested in American history. He had written a couple of articles on American topics and published them. I thought, it will be just another dinner party, get some sherry, and it will be cold.

It was a nasty, snowy night, and I walked through kind of wet snow to get to the dinner party. I happened to get there first and sat down, and the first surprise was that he said, "Would you like a martini?"

Lage: He was Americanized.

Stamp: Yes, he had been here. He was married to an American woman, actually. I had a martini, and I had another martini, in fact. Another couple came, in anthropology.

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Stamp: The doorbell rang, and the hostess went to the door, and I heard a woman's voice, and she walked in. I was waiting for the man to follow, but no man followed, and this turned out to be the woman I married.

Lage: My goodness.

Stamp: She sat down next to me, it was the only place that she could sit, and we talked all night. The hostess had done this deliberately. She really was arranging a match.

Lage: Oh, really? Did you know the hostess?

Stamp: Yes, she was at the dinner party that I had given for the Drinnons, so I had met her. I had met her at another party as well, and I knew her husband quite well, because I had dinner with him at Keeble College. Anyway, my future wife, Isabel, was there.

Lage: So someone was playing matchmaker.

Stamp: Yes, absolutely. Well, it turned out that Alec Campbell, who was the man that I had got to know, had grown up in my wife Isabel's village in Scotland. His father was a good friend of Isabel's father, and he was a theologian who in 1962 was a professor of theology at Cambridge.

Lage: Isabel's father?

Stamp: No, Alec Campbell's father. Isabel's father was a medical doctor, he was a general practitioner in the little village of Kilmacoll in Scotland.

That was the beginning of a romance, and we were engaged to be married in two weeks.

Lage: Oh, really? This was whirlwind.

Stamp: Oh, yes. It just went very fast.

Lage: She had been married?

Stamp: She had been married. She was eleven years younger than I am, and she had married in 1949 an Oxford graduate. She was a medical social worker, and when I met her she was working at the Radcliffe Infirmary, which is a teaching hospital, and she was what was then called an almoner, in other words a medical social worker. After she was married in 1949, she and her husband, who had come out of the RAF, migrated to Montreal. She lived in Montreal for two years. She had a child there. Her marriage went sour very

quickly. In '51, '52, she went home with her baby. When I met her, she was divorced, and she had a daughter going on ten years old. In June, my divorce was final, and Isabel and I were married on the fourth of July, in Oxford, in St. Columbo's Church, a Scottish Presbyterian church. That was the event of that year.

Lage: That must have been something of a surprise to your children, coming home with a new wife.

Stampp: Yes, and they were more surprised than pleased.

Lage: It's a hard age, I think, for kids to understand.

Stampp: In '62, my son was turning twenty. My daughter had turned seventeen. Well, I won't go into that any more. There was a problem, a little problem on the other side, too. Isabel's daughter, Michele, had been living with her mother alone for something like eight years in Oxford. Suddenly this man comes along and steals her mother. So there were some problems.



Ken Stampp receiving the Lincoln Prize, 1993.



Isabel and Ken Stamp, 1995.

VII DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, BERKELEY CAMPUS POLITICS, AND
PUBLICATIONS, 1960s-1970s

Stampp: We arrived in Berkeley in August '62 and rented the house of Tom Barnes who was on leave that year. We lived in the Barnes' house until January; then we found a house up on Creston Road and bought it, and lived there for the next four years. Then we moved down to San Luis Road.

I'm trying to think where things were in the fall of 1962. Well, there was the matter of introducing my wife to all these colleagues who were a bit shocked, and to my children--and that took a lot of nervous energy that fall.

Bridenbaugh, Kuhn, and Dupree

Stampp: I have to back up because Bridenbaugh comes into this.

Lage: We left him being elected president of the AHA.

Stampp: Yes. Now, before I went to Oxford, in the spring of 1961--Carl and I had been friends for ten years, and I've told you he was a difficult man. Carl was on the history department's Personnel Committee, and that committee initiated searches if we were looking for new people to bring in, but it also had something to do with promotions.

Lage: And you were on it also?

Stampp: No, I was not on at that time. It was 1961--no, this was before I went to Oxford. This is '60-'61, and I was vice chairman again during that year and Delmer was chairman. He had come back and resumed his chairmanship. So I was vice chairman, and Carl was on the Personnel Committee and might very well have been the chairman of it.

Some time that spring, the question came of promoting Tom [Thomas S.] Kuhn, who was our top man in the history of science, from associate to full professor. He already had tenure. We had another man in the history of science, A. Hunter Dupree. Dupree had a degree, Ph.D. in history, and Tom Kuhn had a degree in physics, perfect from the perspective of the department: somebody looking at the history of science from the standpoint of a scientist, the other looking at it from the standpoint of an historian.

Well, the two of them didn't get on very well. Hunter Dupree was a very good friend of Carl Bridenbaugh's, and it was Carl who really initiated getting Dupree here. Anyway, the question of promotion of Tom Kuhn to full professor came up. Carl raised objections. I wasn't there so I don't know why, but he wanted the whole thing postponed. So the tenure committee did nothing, they did postpone it.

Lage: Had Kuhn written his groundbreaking book? [*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962]

Stampp: He had written, and he was a brilliant man. No, I think his groundbreaking book was something he was working on at that time.

Anyway, that was on a Friday, and Saturday morning I was down on campus, and I saw a number of historians in Carl Schorske's office. Henry May was there, and Joe Levenson was there, and they were very angry at Carl Bridenbaugh. They all thought that Tom Kuhn was brilliant and there should be no question about promotion.

I said, "I'm vice chairman, and I'm going to go to Delmer Brown and ask for another meeting. In fact, I think I'll get a petition." So I wrote a petition asking for another meeting, and got virtually every professor to sign it. I can't remember whether one or two people didn't.

I took it to Delmer. That upset Delmer. Delmer said, "Well, you didn't have to have a petition. Why didn't you just come to me and ask for another meeting?" I should have. After lunch, Carl Bridenbaugh came to my office, and I don't know what he was going to talk about, but I said, "Carl, I don't understand what you did last Friday about Tom Kuhn." He started saying, "Well, Tom Kuhn is not"--something, whatever, and I said, "Well, Carl, I have to tell you that I have given a petition to Delmer asking for another meeting."

Carl got up and walked out of my office and never spoke to me again. He went to Delmer and resigned from the Personnel

Committee. We did have another meeting a week later, and Tom was unanimously nominated for promotion, but that was the beginning of the end of Carl Bridenbaugh at Berkeley.

Lage: Did he leave shortly thereafter?

Stampp: He left the next year. He went to Brown University.

Lage: It's kind of ironic, because he was one of the ones that fought the old-boy system.

Stampp: Yes, it was as if he wanted to destroy the thing he had helped to create.

He went to Brown University very angry and very bitter, and ultimately persuaded Hunter Dupree to go with him.

So when I came back in 1962--this is why I remembered it--Bridenbaugh was no longer here. It was the most astonishing thing, the whole thing. After ten years of friendship, once I had disagreed with him, that was it.

If either Kuhn or Dupree had been Harvard and the other had not been Harvard, that might have explained it, because Carl had a thing about Harvard.

Lage: You mean if one had been from Harvard?

Stampp: Both of them were Harvard Ph.D.'s. Tom Kuhn and Hunter Dupree both had Harvard Ph.D.'s. So did Carl Bridenbaugh. And as I've told you before, Carl was always in competition with Harvard, and he was going to build a better department.

Lage: Let me just ask one more thing: how long did Tom Kuhn stay after that? Because he also left.

Stampp: He stayed another couple years, then had the offer from Princeton and went to Princeton. Then the FSM thing came up, and that led to a couple of other resignations, or at least it was a contributing part to a couple of other resignations. David Landes left and went to Harvard.

SLATE, Free Speech on Campus, and the Civil Rights Movement

[Interview 8: June 4, 1996] ##

Lage: Today is June 4, 1996, and we're into our eighth session with Ken Stamp. We're coming up to Berkeley in the sixties, and of course that sloshes over into the seventies. I thought we might want to start with a little background on campus activities in the fifties as you remember it--in the late fifties.

Stamp: In the late fifties. I have a few recollections of the activities of SLATE. I don't remember the personnel any more, but I know that SLATE was one of the first organizations that tried to open up the campus to political meetings, and they had some success. I remember two specific instances--no, I'm sorry, one.

Somebody from SLATE came to me [in 1963] and asked me to sponsor a meeting on campus to hear Herbert Aptheker speak on a historical topic. I guess he was considered to be the theoretician of the Communist party in the United States, but he was also a historian. He had written several books on African Americans in various aspects of American history. He had written a book called *American Negro Slave Revolts*, and the subject of his topic was going to be Reconstruction historiography.

I offered to sponsor it, and they went to the administration. At that time Ed Strong was chancellor. SLATE was turned down on the grounds that there was a regents' rule that no Communist was to speak on campus, in addition to the fact that there was to be no political activity on campus, but this was not political.

Lage: Right, this was an academic matter.

Stamp: It was an academic matter. So the meeting had to be held in Stiles Hall. We got a room there, and I was still sponsoring it. I introduced Herbert Aptheker, since that was my field. He spoke for fifty minutes or so about Reconstruction historiography. We had a lot of students, a lot of graduate students, two members of the faculty. Frankly, it was an awfully dull speech. He had a bunch of three-by-five cards with titles on them, and he sort of flipped through them and said, "This is a good book, this is a bad book," and a little more, but not much more than that. So it was rather disappointing from that standpoint.

Lage: Was there anything new or--

Stamp: No.

Lage: --inventive in looking at Reconstruction historiography?

Stampp: No. Then a hat was passed to raise some money for Aptheker to help pay his expenses, and he said, "Well, I really ought to pay you for this," and we decided we didn't want his money. [laughter] That was the end of that meeting.

SLATE, as I recall, went back to the administration twice more, once to ask for a room on campus to play tapes of, I believe, some Communist speakers, and they were turned down. Then they went back to the administration and asked to read excerpts from books in the Berkeley library, and that they could hardly turn down, so they got the meeting. This led fairly soon to the rescinding of the rule against Communists speaking on campus. The ridiculousness of it was so clear. I'm weak on dates, but that's the background of that.

The question of free speech on the campus was merging very rapidly, with the interest of SLATE in the civil rights movement in the South. As you know, things were rather boiling in the South in the late fifties. A number of Berkeley students, graduate students, were very active in it, and members of the faculty--Charlie Sellers was particularly active in the movement and the Freedom Riders movement. He went to Mississippi, must have been 1963, I believe. In these early years, the culmination was the march from Selma to Montgomery.

Lage: I have '65 as the date of that march.

Marching from Selma to Montgomery

Stampp: '65. You're probably right. Anyway, a group of historians got interested in participating at least in the last phase of the march, to join them somewhere outside of Montgomery, and then march into Montgomery and up to the state capitol. I went. Larry Levine was a young assistant professor then, and we raised some money from within the department to help pay Larry Levine's expenses. We flew to Atlanta, and there we were met by a bus that took us to Tuskegee Institute and stayed the night there, and interestingly, in a building that had been built in the early twentieth century for white visitors only.

Lage: Oh, that is kind of ironic.

Stampp: Yes. Well, that was the Tuskegee system. Blacks at that time were admitted, but that building Booker T. Washington had built

for Northern white benefactors of Tuskegee, so they could stay there. A lily white group, except for the waiters, I presume.

From there, we were driven to Montgomery, to the outskirts of Montgomery. Actually, we went the night before the last day of the march. As I recall, it was a fairgrounds, with a stand and a huge crowd there, and lots of entertainers--Peter, Paul, and Mary, and a lot of celebrities were there that night. It was quite an evening. Then back to Tuskegee, and the next morning, back again to join the march.

The march was peaceful, lots of police around to make sure that nobody made trouble. I remember marching through an area of Montgomery that was almost solidly inhabited by blacks, and I remember the rather passive looks on the faces of many of them. They were out sitting or standing on their porches, but I didn't see many people out hurrahing and cheering.

Lage: Sort of, "What's going on here?"

Stampp: Well, I guess they knew what was going on, but I guess they also were cautious about being too demonstrative in expressing their enthusiasm.

We got to the state house. The governor wasn't around, and Martin Luther King made his speech. There were lots of other speakers as well. Then we went back to Tuskegee, and from there to Atlanta.

Oh, I remember--in Atlanta, I had a phone call from somebody from *Time* magazine. *Time* magazine was doing a review of my book--it was '65, that's right, because my reconstruction book was coming out--and *Time* magazine ran a review of it, and some photographer came and took my picture.

Lage: That would politicize your book in some ways.

Stampp: Yes, well, I suppose. Oddly enough, that photographer was at the rally the night before, up on the platform or near the platform, and I had the bad luck of knocking over his camera. [laughs] He was very unhappy about it and said something rather unpleasant, and the next morning, he was there to take my picture. [laughter] I reminded him that I had knocked over his camera, and that was the end of that.

Lage: Did a lot of Berkeley professors go to that?

Stampp: I think that Larry Levine and I were the only ones. That is my recollection. I think the two of us were the only ones, as I

recall, but there was a big group of--there must have been, oh, at least forty historians from everywhere. C. Vann Woodward was there, and Walter Johnson, and Richard Hofstadter, as I recall, were there. They were well represented, in any case.

Lage: It's kind of interesting that historians chose to come as historians.

Stampp: They were all historians, but they were coming as individuals.

Lage: They weren't group representatives?

Stampp: They were not representing the American Historical Association or the Organization of American Historians. They were there as individuals. We carried no banner; I mean, there was no way of identifying. There was nothing about historians for civil rights or anything of that sort.

Lage: Were you finding a different kind of student on campus, maybe as a result of the civil rights demonstrations?

Stampp: I was finding a significant minority of students in the early 1960s who were more politically active and politically aware and more concerned about social issues at that time, segregation and free speech on campus. But one must always remember that we had a student body of about 27,000, and if there were a few thousand--probably less--that would probably include everyone in the movement. From time to time, more students would feel some sympathy for some particular issue, but as far as being organized and what you could call activist, it was always a minority. I think probably the majority of students had some vague and mild sympathy for the Free Speech Movement, but they were certainly not active participants in it.

I would say that was probably true of the faculty as well. Most of the faculty who played an active part in it came from a few departments--sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, English, political science--not many from the sciences. Not that there weren't any; there were some, but not a great number.

Lage: Did many professors get involved, or did you yourself, in the local civil rights demonstrations that were also beginning to be more frequent?

Stampp: Well, again, a small number, and this was largely the work of CORE, Congress on Racial Equality. The most active member in that group on the faculty, as far as I know, was Charlie Sellers. He was very active in organizing picketing. I participated with one of my daughters, as a matter of fact, in picketing Palmer's Drug

Store and other stores--I think Hink's was being picketed at the time for not hiring black employees. I don't know how much good it did, but it made us feel good doing something and carrying a sign, and I was very pleased that one of my daughters was there with me carrying a sign.

Lage: Was this your younger daughter or your older?

Stamp: This was Isabel's daughter, Michele. Jenny was much too young then--just a baby--and my other daughter was going to school in Santa Barbara, so Michele was the one who was the activist at that point.

The Free Speech Movement and the Senate Committee on Academic Freedom

Lage: Well, shall we get into your take on FSM and what you recall about faculty response?

Stamp: All right. The FSM movement, the Free Speech Movement, got its start in the fall of 1964, and during the first few episodes, I was not here. I was up at Lake Tahoe, closing up our cottage. We had a cottage up there at that time. The famous incident on campus when the police car was surrounded and all that, I did not witness. I was not here, and I heard about it when I got back.

Lage: That was in the fall, late September, early October.

Stamp: It was September and early October. I can't remember just how things developed. There was a kind of escalation as it went on. Very soon, the Committee on Academic Freedom got involved, and I was on the committee that year along with Professor Jacobus ten Broek, who was then, I believe, in the political science department. He was moved over from the Department of Speech. There were a number of people--Woodrow Borah was for years in the speech department and moved over [to the history department]. At some point, ten Broek did move over to political science.

The chairman of the committee was somebody in business administration, Joseph Garbarino. Then there was another man from physics named Carl Helmholtz on the committee, and there was still another, and I can't remember his name. Helmholtz was in physics, and there was another man in one of the sciences whose name I don't remember. The chairman of the committee sympathized with FSM but was not an enthusiastic supporter. I think ten Broek and I were the ones who were most supportive of it.

Lage: Were the people traditionally on that committee more interested in faculty issues?

Stampp: I suppose so.

Lage: Kind of a new set of problems.

Stampp: I suppose so. I was on the committee in 1957-58, 1960-61, 1964-65, and 1966-67, and I don't remember the committee fighting for the right of students to engage in political activity on campus before 1964.

Lage: Were you put into a central role?

Stampp: Well, the Committee on Academic Freedom met with the steering committee of FSM. We had a number of meetings, I can't remember exactly how many, but I do have some vivid memories of Bettina Aptheker, who was a member of the committee, and Mario Savio, who was the head of FSM. They were an interesting pair. Bettina Aptheker happened to be a student in my lecture course that term as well. She was coming out of a Communist party family [daughter of Herbert Aptheker]. She knew something about political discipline.

Lage: Right! [laughs]

Stampp: Mario Savio was a rather undisciplined free spirit, and I remember the meetings of the steering committee with the Committee on Academic Freedom with Savio always sitting on the edge of his chair like this [demonstrates], ready to jump up and leave if things didn't go his way. They didn't always go his way, and he would say, "Come on, let's go, out." They never did go out, actually. This committee was their best hope, I guess, as far as the faculty was concerned.

Bettina would come up to me afterwards and sort of apologize for Mario's behavior. [laughs]

Lage: She seemed to be the one who got along best, or one of the best, with the administration, with the dean of students and others.

Stampp: Yes, and with the Committee on Academic Freedom. Her goals were the same, but she knew a bit more about disciplining a political movement and staying in line and so on. I would say that she was the most sophisticated, as far as tactics were concerned, of the members of the steering committee.

It finally led in December to the occupation of the administration building by some 700 students and their arrest early in the morning of December 2, 1964.

Then the strike. I had mixed feelings about faculty dismissing classes. If students wanted to go on strike, that's fine, that's their decision. But there were students who did not sympathize with the strike, and several of them came and talked to me saying, "You can't make decisions for us. You must be there to lecture if we want to come to lectures."

I missed one class. I didn't dismiss my class except once when the Committee on Academic Freedom was meeting, and some of my students were a little upset about that. I held a special class later on for those who wanted to come to make up for the class I missed.

I really had very strong feelings about the Free Speech Movement. I sympathized with it, but also about our responsibilities as teachers here, and not making these decisions for students. If you dismiss your class, then you've made the decision for all of them, whether they sympathize with it or not.

In any case, that is when the Committee on Academic Freedom began meeting and meeting and meeting. Out of the meetings came the so-called December 8 Resolutions, which was a whole series about political meetings on campus and the rights of students to speak and to advocate, and that led to a faculty meeting on December 8. The night before that, there was a meeting of another group, I think from the Academic Senate. It was a group closer to Clark Kerr than our group, and I remember that Seymour Lipset was always in contact with Clark Kerr. He was almost like Clark Kerr's representative on the campus and the faculty. Lipset and Clark Kerr were very close.

Lipset was not really in sympathy with the December 8 Resolutions, nor was Clark Kerr. Clark Kerr was really quite angry about this. But we took our December 8 Resolutions to the other meeting of faculty and read them to them and got their approval.

Lage: Was this the entire faculty meeting, or another group meeting?

Stamp: No, it was another group.

Lage: There seemed to be a lot of groupings, Committee of 200--

Stamp: Yes, there were. I remember we hammered out these December 8 Resolutions, and as I recall, I took them over to the other

meeting and read them to them and got their approval. Then the next day there was a faculty meeting in Wheeler Auditorium.

Lage: That was December 8, when they accepted it.

Stampp: That was December 8, yes, and the room was packed. There must have been 700 or more members of the faculty there, but remember, it was a faculty of 1,500, so about half of them were not there.

Lage: Right. But still, that's a lot more than usually came.

Stampp: Oh, yes indeed. One hundred fifty to 200 is about the usual turnout for an Academic Senate meeting, unless something exciting happens. And the resolutions were read, I believe by the chairman of our committee.

Now, I should say that if there was one person who had more input in working out these resolutions than anyone else, that was Chick ten Broek, Jacobus ten Broek. The rest of us made some changes and made some suggestions, and I had met with ten Broek at his house. As a matter of fact, you know he was blind.

Lage: Yes.

Stampp: As I recall, I was writing and he was throwing out the ideas, and then we came to the committee with them.

Lage: That was the time, place, and manner rules?

Stampp: That was the time, place, and manner thing, yes. And there was a vote, and my recollection was that the faculty overwhelmingly ratified. There were several who spoke against them.

Lage: That meeting followed right on that Greek Theatre incident. Do you remember that disastrous Greek Theatre meeting?

Stampp: Yes, I do remember that.

Lage: So there must have been a lot of emotion.

Stampp: When Savio was grabbed by the police, wasn't he, and pathetically said, "I was just going to propose something rather innocent," which I had to doubt.

Lage: Were you beginning by that time to be suspicious of the FSM leaders?

Stampp: No. I supported the FSM through that winter, and there were lots of other meetings and incidents, and my support of the FSM

continued into and probably through the summer of 1965. By the summer of '65, it was merging with other issues--there was the civil rights movement in the South, there was free speech on the campus, and now Vietnam. Shall I go on from here?

Lage: Sure.

Stampp: Because as far as I'm concerned, the students won. They got the right to have political meetings on campus.

Lage: The December 8 Resolutions that were more or less adopted.

Stampp: Yes, that was a victory for the students, and they thought so themselves. So it was a matter of going on to other issues, some of them silly issues.

Lage: Like the Filthy Speech Movement.

Stampp: Like the Filthy Speech Movement, yes. That really was a disgrace on a university campus, I thought.

I was away part of the summer of 1965, but by September, the movement on the campus had shifted very decidedly toward being anti-Vietnam, and this is where Jerry Rubin comes in. I remember him very well, because I went in September to a meeting that was held in the Life Science Building, the big lecture room--I think it was 2000 LSB, the one that had about 500 seats.

I remember the meeting concerned Vietnam, and Jerry Rubin was to be the big man. This to me was a shock. He was about a half-hour late, and we sat and waited, and then he came in--it looked to me with about five guys with him, almost like bodyguards. Jerry Rubin began to look like a commissar. This really turned me off.

Lage: Was it how he looked, or also the way he--

Stampp: Not how he looked. It was partly how he acted, but also, it was clear to me that Jerry Rubin was thinking in terms of a much broader radical movement than merely fighting Vietnam. Vietnam to him--and he was fairly honest about it--was simply a way, a means, a vehicle, for tearing down the whole damn system. I thought Vietnam and the opposition to it was an issue big enough in itself, and one didn't have to think you had to tear down the whole government in order to do something about Johnson's policy in Vietnam.

That's when I began to back off. My position then was that the faculty of the University of California as an administrative

body ought not to take stands on issues that had no relationship to academic freedom. I always advocated, and unsuccessfully, when the Academic Senate was in session, that we recess and meet as members of the faculty, as individual members of the faculty, and express our views on any political issue we wanted to express it on as a group of concerned academics, but not as a governing body of the University of California.

Lage: Did you see it as a poor precedent?

Stampp: I saw it as a very poor precedent, because we had been fighting for years against the regents taking positions on political issues.

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Lage: We were talking about the precedent of injecting the political issues in the university.

Stampp: Right. My memory of specific times is vague, but I do know that several times, there were meetings where people were trying to get the faculty as the Academic Senate to take political stands, and a couple of times they succeeded. I was very unhappy about that, because I remember the regents taking stands as a governing body on issues, and we didn't like the stands they were taking, and our protest was that they shouldn't be doing these things in the name of the university. So now we were doing it. Of course, our issues were all the good issues and theirs were all the bad issues, but I thought one side was as bad as the other on that.

Division Among the Faculty

Lage: In the history department, how did the faculty break down over response to FSM and the kind of issue you just described? Was it a fairly tense time?

Stampp: It was a tense time, and there were men--I guess it was a men's department still.

Lage: [laughs] I think it pretty much was.

Stampp: Adrienne Koch had left some time during this period. Yes, the department divided. There were several members of the department who were disgusted with the whole thing, with the administration, everything. I know David Landes was here, and he had an offer

from Harvard in economics--but also he had a part appointment in history--and Henry Rosovsky. Both were disgusted, and they left.

Lage: Now, were they disgusted because they thought the administration was giving in to the students?

Stampp: They were disgusted with the whole business, with the whole thing. With the behavior of the administration and the behavior of student leaders. I remember some demonstration one night on campus, it was in what was then the student union, that sort of imitation castle down there--

Lage: Right, Stephens Hall.

Stampp: Yes. I remember David Landes being there and saying, "This really does it. I'm getting out." There were a number of members of the faculty who got out. In the history department--

Lage: Henry May was chairman during that year of FSM.

Stampp: --Henry May was chairman and was terribly upset about the whole thing. He was very ambivalent about the student thing and very concerned about what it was doing to the university, and certainly was not an all-out supporter of the Free Speech Movement, even in the fall of 1964. Charlie Sellers was probably the most ardent and unqualified--well, I've got to add a couple. So was Carl Schorske.

As I said, at that time, I was, too. I would say that there was a middle group of people like Hans Rosenberg, who was not an activist but certainly gave his support to the movement. Then there were others who really didn't like it at all; Ray Sontag, for example, was very much against it. Martin Malia was very strongly opposed to it.

Lage: Was it generational at all? It doesn't sound so as you describe it here.

Stampp: No, I don't think so. It was, I suppose, partly ideological and also depended on how important you think it was for students to be able to agitate on campus. I suppose you can make a case that that's not what students are supposed to be doing on campus. I don't know.

Lage: Was it a threat to departmental unity, or was there a good measure of civility, or how did it go?

Stamp: Well, yes. You know, the thing got violent, and the police were coming on campus. Reagan was elected in 1966, Clark Kerr was fired--

Lage: Yes. It got more heated later.

Stamp: --and the firing of Clark Kerr really brought the faculty together, I suppose, more than anything after the crisis of the Free Speech Movement. There was just universal indignation about that.

Lage: Even though the faculty had been a bit disillusioned with Kerr, it seemed?

Stamp: That's right. Well, I was, and those who were really supporting the movement. Clark Kerr was very angry at the Committee on Academic Freedom for what they did and for the December 8 Resolutions. Clark Kerr, I suppose, was an example of one of the dangers when a member of the faculty becomes president of the university or a chancellor. Coming from the faculty, he has a feeling that the faculty ought to trust him. Clark Kerr on a number of occasions sounded off about how ungrateful we were for the things he did. I sat in his office one time when he turned to me and said that he had supported the appointment of someone who had been a member of the Communist party some time ago, and I ought to be grateful about that. That was one of the problems.

However, when the regents fired Clark Kerr, that was something else. We might not be on the best of terms with Clark Kerr, and he with us, but for this Board of Regents to fire him, with the urging of Reagan, was an outrage.

Lage: I remember the bumper stickers: "Chicken Little was right."
[laughter]

Stamp: Yes, yes.

Lage: People were scared, I think, for the university.

Stamp: Right. So to illustrate, I guess, how they all came together, I was on one side and Martin Malia way on the other side, but Martin Malia and I got together and wrote a letter to the *Chronicle* about the behavior of the regents and the behavior of the governor, and said it was an absolute disgrace what they had done. On that we could agree.

Then we had a big indignation meeting about the firing of Clark Kerr. There were two groups, if you can call left and right here, left and center: one that Howard Schachman and Charlie

Sellers were involved with, and then a somewhat more moderate group that I was involved with. We ultimately came together on some resolutions that we thought should be adopted by the faculty.

There was a big faculty meeting--again, I can't remember the room it was in--but I was the one delegated to read these resolutions to the faculty, and then we defended them. They were passed almost unanimously by the faculty--conservatives, middle-of-the-roaders, radicals--everyone could at least agree that what the regents had done was outrageous and disgraceful.

Lage: So that's '67. Kerr was fired in January.

Stampp: '67, yes. We're up to '67 now.

Now, somewhere in that period, in that time frame, there was the question of Arthur Goldberg coming to Berkeley to speak in defense of the Johnson administration and its Vietnam policy.

Lage: I couldn't find a date for that, but I'm sure we can somewhere.

Stampp: Yes, I just can't tell you when it was. It was obviously sometime in '66 or '67 [it was March 1966]. It was before the election of '68. Once again, I was simply appalled when I found that what had been the FSM was determined not to let Arthur Goldberg speak here. This seemed to me outrageous. If you don't like what he has to say, you can not attend, whatever, but to say he cannot come on the campus seemed to me was violating everything that the FSM had stood for in 1964.

Well, ultimately, they had to work out a compromise. They would let Goldberg speak, provided afterwards he would come into the men's gym and they would have another meeting at which I think Reggie Zelnick was going to preside. Someone with an appointment in history and sociology was going to refute Goldberg or debate Goldberg--Franz Schurmann was going to debate.

In 1966-'67, another group had formed, and I can't remember all the members of it, but Martin Malia was in it, and a man in chemical engineering, [Charles] Susskind. These were very conservative people, and I felt rather uncomfortable with them.

Lage: Among them?

Stampp: Among them. I was sort of the left wing of that group, but I did sympathize with some of their criticism of the student movement.

Lage: Was this an ad-hoc group of faculty?

Stamp: It was an ad-hoc group of faculty, and we met a number of times in the Faculty Club. We didn't do very much, but talked, anyway.

Personal Political Views

Lage: So you must have been pretty disturbed to get involved in a group that wasn't your usual sort, politically.

Stamp: Yes, and I was basically much more liberal or left-wing. Through all of this I always thought of myself as a left-wing Democrat, somebody who had left the Socialist party and gone over to the very left wing of the Democratic party, on all kinds of social issues--on civil rights and on integration and on economic issues, that's where I still stood.

Lage: And the war. Were you opposed to the war?

Stamp: The war in Vietnam? Totally opposed to it! Absolutely opposed to it.

Lage: I thought so, but it doesn't hurt to put it on the record.

Stamp: Well, yes. But that didn't mean I wanted the faculty of the University of California as part of the governing body of the university to be taking political stands, even on issues like Vietnam. If it were something involving academic freedom or censorship, fine. I mean, these are things that directly concern an academic community.

Lage: Did the student movement seem very different to you than what you had been involved in yourself in the thirties? How would you characterize the two movements?

Stamp: Oh, dear.

Lage: As an old left looking at the new left.

Stamp: Yes. [pause] Well, the student movement, to the extent that there was a student movement at Wisconsin when I was there, was not comparable as a student movement to the FSM movement here. The Depression didn't really do that. Everybody was so worried about jobs and about the economy that it didn't really lead to that. Roosevelt in office meant that. If Hoover had been in office, there might have been a much more organized political movement, but Roosevelt took over and disarmed, almost, people like me.

Lage: Of course, Johnson sort of disarmed the civil rights activity.

Stampp: Absolutely, absolutely, and this was terrible. I was an ardent supporter of Lyndon Johnson in 1964. The only president I've ever written to, as a matter of fact, was Lyndon Johnson on civil rights, congratulating him on sponsoring the Civil Rights Acts and telling how great I thought it was that ultimately, it was a Southerner who came forward with the civil rights legislation. So my turning against Johnson was always on Vietnam.

I had no quarrel with Johnson's social policies and civil rights policies and so on, but I certainly wasn't going to vote for him in 1968. It was terribly disillusioning. I was very upset when the convention nominated Hubert Humphrey because of his, what seemed to me, sycophantic support of Lyndon Johnson when Hubert Humphrey knew better.

Lage: Yes, he had been such a good liberal.

Stampp: Yes. He should never have supported Johnson, he should have broken with him on that.

Lage: So you weren't happy with what was happening with Vietnam, but also not happy with the way it was going on the campus.

Stampp: Well, I can only say I was absolutely, totally opposed to our policy in Vietnam, I thought we should have got out of Vietnam.

[laughs] Did I tell you about going to South America in 1967?

Lage: No.

Stampp: Well, this is connected. It's a silly incident. I was invited to attend an international Hispanic and American conference on the comparative history of slavery, and we met for a week in Rio de Janeiro and then went to Chile, to Santiago. While we were in Rio de Janeiro, my wife and I had an anniversary, and we had dinner alone together and decided, rather recklessly, I guess, knowing Rio, to walk home from the restaurant at midnight, and that was not very wise. The innocence somehow helped, and nothing happened.

We suddenly found ourselves in front of the American consulate. We had a lot of wine with dinner. I remember yelling inside, "Get out of Vietnam!" [laughter] Well, that was 1967.

Black Nationalism, Black Studies Program

Stampp: Now things are shifting again. Now the black revolution comes in, so you have the Free Speech Movement, you have Vietnam, you have the civil rights movement in the South, and now you have black nationalism.

Lage: Which also came onto campus.

Stampp: That came on campus. Then by 1967 or '68, the question of a black studies department came up, and at this time, Walter Knight was dean of the College of Letters and Science. I was invited because of my own research interest to attend a meeting, and I really was worried about a black studies department. Looking back now, I think it was inevitable, and I guess we had to have it, but I always felt that black history ought to be part of American history, and that we ought to be teaching more black history in our American history survey course. I think I was wrong, but I was not sure that I thought it was a good idea to have a course just in the history of blacks in America. I think I was wrong.

Lage: Now, why do you think you were wrong, in retrospect?

Stampp: Well, I think it was necessary. I think it was necessary from the standpoint of the black community, to have this recognition, and I suppose in academic terms, it was kind of affirmative action. "Now we're going to get a course where we talk about blacks." I hoped, and I still hope, that it's a temporary thing and that ultimately black history will have become so much a part of American history that we won't feel the need for it any more than we feel the need for a course in German history in America or Italian history or whatever. But I think now that it was probably necessary.

For me personally, this created a problem I never anticipated, because part of the black nationalist ideology was that no white man or woman could ever understand black history or black culture or what it meant to be black in America, and there I was with my book on slavery.

Lage: But one that was pretty well respected by blacks, wasn't it?

Stampp: Well, yes. When it came out, there were white Southerners who didn't like it, and now, suddenly, I found blacks who didn't like it.

Lage: Did they have specific objections to the book, or just to the fact that it was written by a white person?

Stampp: It hit me suddenly in the summer of 1968. I told you earlier about attending a meeting on black history and black studies at Wayne State University in Detroit and confronting a group of black militants who felt that whites could never understand black history.

Lage: Well, it just struck me that this is only six years after Carl Bridenbaugh made his speech saying that the immigrant generation couldn't write about American history.

Stampp: That's right.

Lage: It's like a different world, but the same argument, in a way.

Stampp: That's right. Absolutely.

Well, I think the answer is that we try our best. I certainly tried my best to understand what it was like, and I did make the concession at one point in my slavery book that probably no one who's never been a slave could possibly understand what the experience was like, of being a slave.

Lage: Even a black free person would have trouble.

Stampp: Yes.

About the same time, 1968 or '69, I was invited to attend another conference on black history at, I think it was, Evergreen College in Seattle. This was another experience. A group of Black Panthers were also invited to attend, and we, the whites, had to sit and watch a group of Black Panthers up on the platform having a rap session, and letting us have it left and right. We were all pretty intimidated, too, I must say.

Lage: Did you know that was the setup when you went up there?

Stampp: I can't remember. It wouldn't have made any difference, as far as I'm concerned, if I had known; I would have gone anyway.

Lage: And did your group have a reply, or how was it set up?

Stampp: No, I don't think we replied.

Lage: Just two separate--

Stampp: Well, there was no group. I mean, there were some of us invited to speak there, and I was one who was invited to speak. I did speak. No, I think this was simply a matter of our sitting and

listening to them sounding off. And they did sound off, all right.

Lage: Now, Berkeley had a lot of historians who wrote about black history.

Stampp: Sellers, Litwack, Levine, Win Jordan.

Lage: Right. I don't remember any black historians. Was there an effort to change this?

Stampp: Yes. We considered several people. I'm sorry, I'm not going to be very good on the names, because it was way back. We did make an effort, and not successfully, to get black historians there.

Lage: Not successfully because they went elsewhere?

Stampp: Well, they went elsewhere, yes. As I recall, we had a visitor here--he's dead now, I can't remember his name. He was a Berkeley Ph.D., and he went to Harvard and became the head of their Black Studies Program at Harvard instead of coming here. There was another in Chicago, I remember we invited him, and he decided not to come at that time.

Lage: There was a lot of competition.

Stampp: Yes. There was a lot of competition for very few people, and we were trying not just to bring a black here for the sake of having a black, although we certainly felt the need to have one. I think most of us felt that you only defeat what you're trying to achieve if you bring somebody who simply is not qualified to teach and to do research at the level that we hope to maintain at Berkeley.

So finally, we got Waldo Martin to come here. And then--what was the year--there was another historian in the black studies department here, Albert J. Raboteau, who ultimately went to Princeton, and he wrote a book about black religion. As far as I know, he's still at Princeton, but he was here for a time. I remember talking to him a lot about black religion at a time when I was sort of revising some of my views about the importance of the church and Christianity in black culture.

I think that's about all I have to say about the late sixties.

Lage: Do you have any other recollection of the third world college idea? Were you involved?

Stamp: I was not, since I had reservations about it, I was out. I was frozen out totally and really had nothing to do with it. You would have to talk to Leon Litwack about that.

Lage: Okay.

Stamp: Or Larry Levine.

Student Strike, 1970: Rights and Responsibilities

Lage: Do you remember--it seems to me that in the late sixties, the atmosphere on campus was very different, the fire and then tear gas on campus.

Stamp: Right, I do remember that. I remember Bob Middlekauff talking to teaching assistants--this gets us to Cambodia.

Lage: Right, into the seventies.

Stamp: Nineteen-seventy and Cambodia, the Cambodian invasion, and the strike on campus. Once again, I did not sympathize with faculty who dismissed their classes. Charlie Sellers simply told his students, "Go out and work for peace." Gave them all grades. Incidentally, he picked up his paychecks, but his readers lost their jobs and lost their money.

I thought he ought to have paid them. One of them happened to be a student of mine who came in rather bewildered and said, "My income is gone because Sellers isn't teaching his course." There were other members of the faculty who just dismissed their students and told them to go out and work for peace, and gave them all A's or all B's or something like that. I thought that was just outrageous.

If you want to know exactly what I felt, I thought the Committee on Privilege and Tenure should have met. If tenure means something, it also means you have responsibilities, and I frankly would have fired a couple of these people who kept picking up their paychecks and not teaching.

Lage: Did the department take stands on that?

Stamp: Not as a department. I remember Bob Middlekauff--this is why I suddenly remembered the Cambodian thing. We had a department meeting, and Bob Middlekauff was in charge of T.A. appointments, teaching assistant appointments. He said, "Do as you want, but I

want to tell you, if you don't teach your classes, I'm not going to recommend you for reappointment next year." And it would take a Bob Middlekauff to do it.

Lage: [laughs] But he couldn't say that to the professors.

Stamp: He couldn't say it to the professors, that's right, but he could say it to the teaching assistants.

Lage: So did the teaching assistants fall in line pretty much?

Stamp: Some did and some didn't.

Lage: Did you have any particular problems with yours?

Stamp: I had no teaching assistants at that time. I was not teaching in the survey course at that time, so it had nothing to do with me. My readers kept reading.

Lage: It was very divisive, it seems.

Stamp: It was very divisive, yes, indeed.

Politics and the Organization of American Historians

Lage: Let's see. You also mentioned--actually, I can't quite remember--your opposition to the OAH's [Organization of American Historians] taking a stand.

Stamp: Yes. There was a meeting of the Organization of American Historians in Los Angeles in April of 1970, while the Cambodia thing was still very hot, and at the business meeting of the Organization of American Historians, someone came forward with a proposal that the Organization of American Historians, as an organization of historians, denounce the Cambodian incursion or invasion. Merrill Jensen was president of the OAH at that time, and I got up and made a motion that the business meeting of the OAH recess so that those members who want to meet and discuss Cambodia, and whatever else they want to discuss, could do it and take what action they would like to as individuals.

Lage: Similar to your stand, your recommendation, for the university.

Stamp: Right, exactly.

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Stamp: I made my motion. I believe we adjourned for dinner and then came back. That's my recollection. I know that I was in a small minority. My good friend Richard Current was there, I knew he was going to vote with me. David Potter was there, David Potter of Stanford; I knew he was going to vote with me.

Sitting next to me was Ed Morgan of Yale, and he turned to me and said, "You're going to tear the organization apart with your motion." I said, "Well, the guy who made the motion is going to tear us apart, too. It's going to be torn apart one way or the other."

Anyway, the vote came, and I would say at least two-thirds of the members of the organization voted me down, and then they adopted their resolution denouncing Vietnam. So the OAH was taking political action, and the men and women who were so enthusiastic about it--if somebody on the other side would have offered resolutions supporting Nixon, they would have been terribly indignant about it, and over a lot of other things that I can think of that somebody might have made a motion for.

Well, I still think I was right, and I would do it again if I had to.

Lage: Did it tear the organization apart?

Stamp: Yes. There was a very substantial number of moderate and I guess conservative historians who were appalled--some of them quit, but I would say most of them simply opted out. They just wanted to have nothing more to do with the government of the OAH. The organization was politicized, and it was politicized, in my opinion, by a group of political activists. Eric Foner, in my opinion, was one of them. I think that a succession of presidents of the organization was being chosen on the basis of their political positions more than on the basis of their scholarship. I know that an awful lot of very good scholars were passed over.

Lage: In these years?

Stamp: In these years, yes, in the seventies, and the eighties, for that matter. I can't think of any other reason except political reasons. I'm not naming names, but I could list a dozen historians who never became president of the OAH, and every one of them should have been. A couple in our department, as a matter of fact, should have.

Lage: Now, when you say should have been, how does someone come to the fore as a person who should be president?

Stamp: Should have been? Why do I say they should have been?

Lage: Yes.

Stamp: On the basis of their scholarship and their distinction in the profession, they should have been president. And presumably, the presidency of the OAH or the AHA--you don't choose the president because he's going to become the great leader of the organization; he's president for one year. You can't establish policies and see that they're carried out. You can do a few things, but they're supposedly chosen because they were distinguished scholars, and it's a recognition of them. For one year, they speak for the organization, I suppose. That's all.

President of the OAH, 1977-1978

Stamp: I accomplished one thing during the year I was president of the OAH.

Lage: Now, when was that?

Stamp: '77-'78.

Lage: So it wasn't that much after this, really.

Stamp: It was several years. At that time, we had contested elections. The nominating committee would nominate two candidates, and in my case I was nominated and so was William Appleman Williams--the left and the right, the fascist and the socialist, that's what it was. [laughter]

Lage: Did you see it that way, that they were putting forth--?

Stamp: Well, obviously. They called me up, I'm the notorious conservative who had opposed their Cambodia resolution, so they were going to have a wonderful election in which a good radical like William Appleman Williams would run against this conservative candidate. I still can't think of myself as a conservative.

Lage: [laughs] I can imagine!

Stamp: I won the election, but there was a substantial group that voted against me. Actually, we had to draw platforms. It was ridiculous.

Lage: And that was new to the process, it sounds like.

- Stamp: These elections had been going on for some years, and I thought they were ridiculous. Presumably, you're going to nominate two distinguished historians, and I didn't see any reason why one distinguished historian should end his career knowing he was defeated for the presidency of the OAH. The only thing that was really in my platform was that I was going to get rid of this election system. So I proposed it at a business meeting, and we got rid of it. That's the one thing I can think of that I accomplished.
- Lage: Well, there must have been others besides yourself who--
- Stamp: The result was that the nominating committee, chaired by Eric Foner, after I succeeded in doing that, nominated William Appleman Williams for president the next year, and so he was elected president the next year. [laughter]
- Lage: That's very interesting. Were there more politics in that organization that we should uncover here?
- Stamp: I don't suppose any organization of this kind can ever be totally free of politics. It was certainly not free of politics during World War I and not totally free during World War II. I don't remember any time when the OAH became as politicized as it had become by the 1970s and the late 1960s.
- Lage: Was there more as president that you dealt with along those lines?
- Stamp: Oh, dear, yes. There was another issue involving Herbert Aptheker. Yale University at that time had a policy of permitting groups of students to propose bringing someone in to teach some specific course for a year. Yale University--or rather, a group of students at Yale University--proposed bringing in Herbert Aptheker for a term to teach; he was going to be there for a term. That was it; it was not putting him on the faculty.

A number of members of the history department, including C. Vann Woodward and John Blassingame, their black historian, went to a department meeting and spoke against it. The appointee had to have the sponsorship of a department. That was it. The history department refused to sponsor Herbert Aptheker, and I know the reason why Woodward spoke against it. He was on the advisory board of a publication project, and Aptheker was editing the papers of [W. E. B.] DuBois. Woodward thought that Aptheker was keeping some things out and putting in a lot of junk simply because some famous person had written to DuBois. He thought that Aptheker was betraying his responsibility, and he didn't want Aptheker teaching at Yale because of that experience.

Blassingame agreed. So there was a black historian there who sided with Woodward.

Well, the result was that the students went to another department, went to the political science department, and the political science department agreed to sponsor him. Well, this had never happened at Yale before, that some department had refused to sponsor someone and then another department stepped in and did it. So there was a faculty meeting, and Woodward got up at the faculty meeting and spoke against it, and it was voted down.

This became a big academic freedom issue, and a complaint was made to the OAH. A proposal was made that we should censure-- I can't remember now whether we would censure just C. Vann Woodward or the Yale History Department. I was president of the organization, and so we had to deal with this. I went several times and met, of all places, in the Hilton Hotel at O'Hare Airport to talk about this issue.

I was opposed to the resolution; I didn't think we should censure Woodward. It came up at the meeting of the council of the OAH, and I relinquished my position as chairman so that I could speak against it.

Lage: What was your point of view?

Stampp: I was very blunt about it. I said, "This is an attempt to censure C. Vann Woodward, and C. Vann Woodward has been a staunch supporter of academic freedom and civil rights, and he had reasons why he did this. You all don't know what his motives are. You are going to, in effect, say that this man is an enemy of academic freedom."

And I won. We had a vote, a secret vote, and they were voted down. Several radicals on it were very angry with me again about this, but it was voted down at the business meeting as well, and that was the end of it. That took more time than anything.

Lage: It sounds worse than being department chairman.

Stampp: [laughs] Yes, well, things like that don't come up every year. It just happened to come up at that time. So once again, I did something less than endear myself to the left-wing view. [laughs]

Lage: Well, that's a very interesting change. It doesn't seem totally about academic freedom but about qualification to teach.

Stamp: Those who supported Aptheker were making it an academic freedom issue, and I couldn't see it that way. I just couldn't see it that way at all.

Consequences of Campus Activism

Lage: There's a lot of talk about how this decade or more of student activism and politicization changed the university, in terms of education. There were several educational reform movements.

Stamp: Oh, yes. The Muscatine Report.

Lage: And the Strawberry College experiment.

Stamp: Yes. I'm in favor of things of that sort. Any kind of experiment. Charlie Sellers was involved in that, and--I'm trying to remember the name of someone in philosophy who was also involved.

Lage: Tussman?

Stamp: Joe Tussman, yes. He and I were high school graduates together in Milwaukee. No, I'm all for things like that. Any time any group of faculty people want to try something, by all means, if they can get the wherewithal to do it, by all means do it.

Lage: Did this whole episode with FSM and faculty involvement make any permanent changes?

Stamp: Well, the big thing which makes everything else unimportant: we finally got rid of the stupid rules about students not being able to advocate political causes on campus, and it's not an issue any more. They meet, and they can have rooms, they can set up tables, they can advocate anything they want. They can speak on Sproul Hall steps--

Lage: And have speakers on campus.

Stamp: --and have speakers on campus advocating everything, yes. That is a tremendous improvement. But it did have some consequences. It embittered members of the faculty; let me give you one example.

John Searle was an ardent supporter of the Free Speech Movement. There's a famous picture of John Searle marching at the head of a group of students with a big sign saying "Free Speech." Have you seen it?

Lage: I know he was ardent; I don't think I've seen that picture.

Stamp: Well, John Searle was one of the faculty leaders of the Free Speech Movement and supported it very strongly in 1964-'65-'66. Then the things happened that I've talked about that turned me sour on it. He came into the chancellor's office under Roger Heyns, and that, I guess, is always a kind of sobering thing. You suddenly have responsibility. So Robert Cole and John Searle and Budd Cheit from business administration were all in the administration.

The things that happened afterwards, in the late sixties and then the Cambodia thing, soured John Searle; we'll just stick to him, but I can think of another--maybe I had better add another one, Paul Seabury in political science. He had been president of Americans for Democratic Action, a very liberal Democratic organization.

These two men, and others like them--I just remember them because I knew them well--were just soured on the student movement and turned extremely conservative. Paul Seabury was so obsessed with it that we couldn't have him for dinner any more because he couldn't keep off the subject. He would spoil dinner parties by just talking about the awful things that happened.

Searle by the 1980s was a Reaganite.

Lage: Oh, I didn't know he went that far.

Stamp: Oh, absolutely. As a matter of fact, my wife and I went to an evening party at Searle's house. I had sort of lost touch with him, lost track of him for a while. I heard him saying things that night that I couldn't believe. I remember saying, "John, you can't believe these things that you're saying," and it was quite clear that he did. I finally said to John, "I just can't stay here. I just can't hear these things." I said to my wife, "I think we had better leave," and we left.

Lage: What were these comments about?

Stamp: This was about American politics and his feelings about the students, student action, and politics. As I said, he was a Reaganite, he had become a sort of right-wing Republican.

Lage: Was that in the seventies still?

Stamp: This is the eighties. I don't know where John is now because--we were just never invited there again, [laughter] and we never invited John.

Lage: All I remember hearing--it's in the papers a lot--is that he took a front line opposing rent control in Berkeley.

Stampp: Oh, yes. Well, that's not in his academic world. That's another thing. I sympathize somewhat with things he's said there, but as far as his politics are concerned, I just couldn't take it.

Lage: What about Carl Schorske? What I remember about him is that he did a lot of P.R. work for the university under Roger Heyns.

Stampp: Yes, right--some--but Carl never changed. Carl went right down the line. I had the feeling that in Carl's view, the students were never wrong and the administration was always wrong.

By the way, in addition to Schorske and others, I should add Henry Nash Smith as another person in whose eyes the administration was always wrong and the students were always right.

Lage: But Schorske did go out and give a lot of talks to alumni.

Stampp: Oh, yes. He was good at that during Roger Heyns' administration; Roger was very much interested in getting the faculty to go out and make the case for the university to the alumni, and Carl Schorske was good at that sort of thing.

Lage: Did you get to know Heyns?

Stampp: I got to know him fairly well, yes, because one year [1966-1967] I was chairman of the Academic Senate's Policy Committee--I think that's what it was called. As chairman of the Senate Policy Committee, I had lots of contacts with Heyns and others in his office, Bob Cole and Budd Cheit among others.

Lage: How did you think he handled things as the campus heated up?

Stampp: I thought he was very good. In a very difficult period, he was doing about as well as anybody could have.

Lage: Okay. Anything else about those times?

Stampp: You know, after Cambodia, I was in my sixties. I retired in 1983, and I little by little began to be less active in campus affairs. I served on another faculty committee later on. I was elected to the Committee on Committees. I ran for that, and I served--I can't remember whether it was one year or two years as a member of the Committee on Committees which helped to set up committees.

Lage: The Committee on Committees; that was in the late sixties, I think [1968-1970].

Stampp: I think it was late sixties, yes. And I was the chairman of the Academic Senate Policy Committee. I accepted the appointment of that one year.

Lage: And what was the role of that?

Stampp: Well, there were an awful lot of things going on at that time, and I can't remember the details, but I know the committee met regularly. Rod [Roderic] Park was one of the members of the committee at that time. We were busy dealing with student affairs and faculty affairs.

Lage: Yes. That's a while ago.

Stampp: Yes, it was a long time ago.

Lage: And it was right in the midst of everything.

Stampp: Yes. I remember we did prepare a report and submit it to the Senate, and it was approved, but I really don't remember the details any more. It's almost thirty years ago, and I haven't checked my notes on that. I would have to go to my files.

The Era of Reconstruction

Lage: Any final thoughts on those times?

Stampp: Well, [laughs] I sometimes wish I hadn't spent so much time on it. I could have written another book. It might have been more worthwhile, too. But it did take an awful lot of time, and I went a long time after publishing my book on Reconstruction before I got another book out. I just ran into a dry spell, but certainly all these upsetting times on the Berkeley campus were one reason for it. So I wish now that I hadn't spent as much time on it as I did. Wish I had been one of those characters who just kept on doing his own work.

Lage: Did a lot of people just keep on?

Stampp: Oh, sure.

Lage: And kind of ignore the whole thing?

Stamp: As a matter of fact, I did publish in 1965 my book on Reconstruction. I can remember two or three of the supporters of the FSM saying, "How on earth did you ever get time to write that book when you were supposed to be doing this work?" [laughter]

Lage: How did you? You had a lot of it done before.

Stamp: Well, it was published in 1965, and I believe I told you the book grew out of the Commonwealth Fund lectures at the University of London. There were seven lectures, and I was determined to have the lectures prepared before I got there.

So I had a set of lectures, and the lectures really had grown out of the lectures I gave to my students in my Reconstruction course. It was something that kept growing and changing as I went along. So it was really where I was at that time as far as Reconstruction was concerned.

After I gave the lectures, Knopf was interested in my doing a book, a short book on Reconstruction; so was I. So I spent 1962, '63, revising the lectures for publication, expanding them. I did some additional research on them, and I had a manuscript ready for Knopf in 1964. It came out in the summer of 1965, and it was a very opportune time with black history becoming popular and the civil rights movement.¹

That isn't what motivated me to write the book in the first place. It was something I had been working on starting back in the 1940s in my teaching. But it did look as if this was an opportunistic thing. That's why *Time* magazine, of course, picked it up and gave me a full page review. It was a revisionist account of Reconstruction.

Lage: And what kind of reviews did it get?

Stamp: Very good reviews, really very good reviews, from professional historians and the newspapers. A few not so favorable in the South, with the myth about black Reconstruction and those black legislatures--there was one black-dominated legislature in South Carolina; the rest were all white-dominated. But in the mythology of the South, it was black voters who were sending the South to ruin and perdition.

So the book came out in '65, Knopf published it, and it sold very well. My slavery book was in paperback by then, and the Reconstruction got into it very quickly. It had for years a big

¹The *Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, New York: Knopf, 1965.

sale in upper division courses and possibly as supplementary reading in survey courses as well, and they're still selling well in paperback.

Lage: Has there been a revision to your revisionist look at Reconstruction?

Stampp: Well, has there been more writing about Reconstruction?

Lage: More a revisionist view.

Stampp: Yes. Eric Foner has written a much bigger, much more ambitious book on Reconstruction. Mine is a book about 240 pages or so; it was meant to be a short one. I think the revisionist view about Reconstruction is very well established now. That is, it wasn't black Reconstruction at all, as far as who was running the things, it was not that at all.

There are different opinions about the Freedman's Bureau and what the Freedman's Bureau did and the role of various political leaders, but I would say that revisionism was a rebellion against probably two books, neither written by professional historians. One was Claude Bowers, who wrote a book called *The Tragic Era*, and another was George Fort Milton, who wrote a biography of Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, very supportive of Andrew Johnson. This interpretation crept into college textbooks and into books that surveyed the Civil War and Reconstruction period. James G. Randall's *The Civil War and Reconstruction* [Boston: Heath, 1937] was very much in that tradition.

The historian who really began this interpretation was William A. Dunning, who taught at Columbia University, who contributed the volume on Reconstruction to the first American Nation series, and he turned out a whole set of students who did Reconstruction of various Southern states. They were all very hostile to the radical Republicans and to the Fourteenth Amendment and to enfranchisement of the blacks. They were full of the racism of the period.

Lage: Now, what period did he write in? Dunning and his students?

Stampp: Dunning wrote in the early twentieth century, and the students were writing in the first couple of decades of the twentieth century.

Lage: And were they Southerners, primarily?

Stampp: Most of them were Southerners, yes. Dunning himself wasn't a Southerner, but most of them were. The first protest against it

was by DuBois, who wrote a book published in the 1930s called *Black Reconstruction*, which was a good, wholesome protest against the Dunning school. Unfortunately, DuBois wrote as a Marxist, and he tried to portray radical Reconstruction in the South as a dictatorship of the proletariat, and that was really nonsense.

Revising California History Textbooks and Max Rafferty, 1964

Lage: A lot of this interpretation seemed to stay on longer in high school textbooks, and I noticed you worked in some California commission to revise textbooks?

Stampp: Oh, that's right. That was back in the sixties.

Lage: That was the mid-sixties, '64.

Stampp: Yes. That was Win Jordan, Charlie Sellers, and I, and there must have been a couple of others. We examined the textbooks.

Lage: Was this a UC project?

Stampp: Well, it was a project that we sort of started ourselves, and we made a report. Remember Max Rafferty--

Lage: Yes, how could I forget.

Stampp: --who was superintendent. Well, you know, with the temper of the times--

Lage: He was superintendent of public schools of California.

Stampp: --the temper of the times was in favor of our criticism of what was being said about blacks in high school textbooks. Max Rafferty approved of what we did.

Lage: He did?

Stampp: Yes. There was a pamphlet, I have a copy somewhere, that we put out about different textbooks, each of us analyzing them. I think it was put out by the State Board of Education with Max Rafferty's signature on the front of it. [laughter] We made a report, actually, to the State Board of Education, I remember, also.

Lage: How did you find the textbooks?

Stamp: Well, they were awful. They were really terrible. It was real old-fashioned accounts. One could say in the first place blacks didn't exist except in a page or so on slavery, and then a bit on the blacks and Reconstruction, not on their culture or accomplishments.

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Lage: I can remember the tone of Reconstruction discussion from those textbooks.

Stamp: From high school textbooks, yes.

Lage: It was not what you would find in your book.

Stamp: Well, that's right.

Lage: Anything to say about Win Jordan?

Stamp: I admired him as my colleague, I was sorry when he left. I thought his book *White Over Black*¹ was a superb piece of work. I regret one thing, and that is his suggestion in it that the civil rights movement was instrumental in my writing my slavery book; it wasn't. [laughs] Outside of that--that's a trivial, personal thing. I don't know what more to say. He was an excellent colleague.

Lage: Why did he leave?

Stamp: You'll have to ask him. I don't know why he left, but at a certain point, he decided to leave.

Munich Lectures, 1968: Changes in the German Students

Lage: You said earlier that you wanted to talk about your students in Munich in '68.

Stamp: Yes, that's right. Students in Munich were quite different from the ones I had known in 1957. Actually, in '68, there was the revolution in Paris, the University of Paris, the Sorbonne--

Lage: It wasn't just Berkeley.

¹Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Stamp: That's right. And lots of trouble at the University of Berlin, and Frankfurt, and other places. Munich was relatively more quiet, but there were lots of student agitators there, and they were ashamed of Munich for not being more aggressive. I taught in the spring of 1968, and I had a number of the students in my class who were active. One was a black student--her father was black and her mother was German, and she was bilingual and very much involved with the protest movement. I remember her saying, "Just come back in another year, and it's going to be different. We're going to be a lot more vigorous and militant than we are right now." There were some demonstrations, student demonstrations.

Ten years or eleven years earlier, in '57, they were very passive students. Most of them had been children during the war. They were still sort of shocked by the whole experience of the war, and I found it very hard to get them to talk and participate in discussions. No problem in '68; these were a different generation of students. They were outspoken about Germany, about the United States.

Lage: Were they angry about the United States?

Stamp: No, I wouldn't say that, but they didn't have stars in their eyes about the United States. They knew enough American history, or they were learning enough American history to know that we had a few things to explain and apologize for. In '68, they were obviously interested in the race question in the United States, and that was something that I was happy to talk to them about, and certainly not defend the United States.

Lage: Yes.

Stamp: I don't know anything more to say about that.

Personnel Committee and Affirmative Action, 1970s-1980s

Lage: Okay. You were on the Personnel Committee a lot, in the late seventies and early eighties, I believe.

Stamp: Yes, the history department Personnel Committee.

Lage: Was this a time when there were a lot of pressure towards affirmative action?

Stamp: Yes. I would say that the department was divided on how aggressively we should pursue it. When I was on the Personnel

Committee in the 1980s, we were certainly trying awfully hard to find black candidates and women candidates. I was on the committee that brought Paula Fass in, and the other--Win Jordan was on the committee, and one of our women historians was on the committee. That committee really was trying very hard to find a woman, and we did find Paula Fass.

Lage: Was this a self-imposed effort, or was it the administration?

Stampp: Well, we were getting pressure from the administration. The administration was getting pressure from the state and from the federal government, and we felt the pressure, no question about it. I think at that time, just as it was probably appropriate to be looking for black historians, it was quite appropriate to be looking for women. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the movement, the supply of women was not very great. Now, I don't know figures, but I think there must be almost as many women graduate students in history now as there are men graduate students, and the supply is growing and growing--and the quality.

Lage: But not as many women professors.

Stampp: But the number is growing, the number is growing.

Lage: Yes. How did the women professors get integrated into the department? Did that change relationships and functioning?

Stampp: Well, I think I've talked about this before, about Adrienne Koch.

Lage: Right, about being the only woman.

Stampp: About the only woman, and Adrienne being a fairly aggressive and able woman, sort of taking on all the men and feeling that they were all her rivals, which I thought was rather unfortunate. I made that statement, and I suppose someone could misunderstand. I guess I felt that from now on, we're going to have more than one woman or no women, but never again just one woman in the department. This sort of token woman was a terrible thing.

Lage: Yes, hard on both.

Stampp: Yes. Obviously, I have been retired now for quite a long time, but in talking to colleagues, it seems to me that the women in the department are integrated into the department, they play a very active role in it. I have heard no Carl Bridenbaugh comments about how things have been going downhill since women have come into the department or anything of that sort. So I am not aware of any adverse feeling about that.

Thoughts on the Quarter System

Stamp: Yes. I retired in '83. I gave my last lecture in March during the winter term. My one great regret, really, was retiring just as we got rid of the confounded quarter system which I hated. Just after I retired, they went back to the semester system.

Lage: Why did you hate the quarter system?

Stamp: Students liked it because apparently from their point of view, they invested less in a quarter, and if things go wrong in one quarter, you can right it, whereas a semester is--. It seemed to me that under the quarter system, which lasts ten weeks or something like that, you're forever beginning and ending courses with little in the middle. I was never able, I thought, to adjust my lectures to the quarter system, having taught for so many years in the semester system. I found it awfully hard to adjust.

Lage: Well, the Berkeley faculty as a whole didn't like it.

Stamp: Well, 80 percent of the Berkeley faculty opposed the quarter system from the very beginning. It was forced on them; it was never something they chose. As soon as they had a choice, the quarter system was gone.

Lage: And stayed in every other UC campus.

Stamp: Well, UCLA still has it.

Lage: All of them.

Stamp: Do all the others have it?

Lage: Yes.

Stamp: Well, that's interesting. I didn't know that. I thought some of the others might have gone back.

Lage: No, I think, as far as I know, every one is--

Stamp: Well, Berkeley is wiser than most.

Lage: [laughs] It seems like doubling the administrative work, if nothing else.

Stamp: That's right. I mean, you're forever registering students, forever giving final exams. The one good thing about it was when the quarter system began--actually, we have this under the

semester system in Berkeley--the fall term begins the end of August, around the first of September, which is fine, and then there's a big break from mid-December until late January.

Lage: Right.

Stamp: I don't know anyone who really liked that quarter system, outside of students.

Lage: I don't know why students like it, frankly.

Stamp: Well, they told me that, you know, if things go wrong in a course, it's only a quarter.

Lage: Or if they don't like a class.

Stamp: Yes, but it's harder to drop out of a class in the quarter system when you've got so few weeks. You can't wait two weeks as you could under the semester system to suddenly switch to another course. But their argument was that you invest less in it. If things go wrong in a course, it's only one quarter and not a whole semester, not a half a year but a third of a year. And of course, Clark Kerr's idea in putting the quarter system in was that we were going to maximize use of the plant.

Lage: Did that kind of thing create unhappiness with Clark Kerr? [The quarter system was instituted in 1966, but plans for it were underway in the FSM years.]

Stamp: Yes. I mean, a lot of people thought that Clark Kerr was too much the business administration man thinking about "maximizing the plant" and that sort of thing, and that didn't sit well.

Lage: And then the students picked up on that--the multiversity.

Stamp: Of course, that meant that he expected a full summer quarter. Then there was talk about coercing students to come for the summer, that they would have to spend at least one summer quarter in Berkeley. Well, that never worked, and so the summer quarter became nothing but a summer school, which is what it had always been in the semester system. So we didn't maximize use of the plant.

Lage: Well, is this a good place to stop? We don't have a lot left, but I would kind of like to have a short session.

Stamp: Yes, let's see. I would like to talk a bit about my last two books and the writing I did in the seventies and eighties, and I guess that would be about it.

Lage: And whatever final thoughts might occur to you.

Stamp: Yes. I'll tell you about the Lincoln prize, and about my time down at the Huntington Library.

Lage: Oh, I didn't know about that.

Stamp: Yes. I spent two four-month periods there. I went to the Huntington for one month and then went back twice, once in '86 when Bob Middlekauff was head of the Huntington and again in '89. I wrote most of my last book at the Huntington.

Briefly on *America in 1857*

Lage: Okay, and your last book you mentioned as being your favorite.

Stamp: Oh, yes. It's the book I enjoyed writing and I think it's my--I like it better. The reason is that I've always felt that writing a book on slavery was a tremendous challenge. It was to me. And I never managed to do everything I wanted to do.

But I really like *1857 (America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990]). It was lots of fun writing it, and it gave me a chance in that one year finally to give my ideas about--there's one chapter called "The Heart of the Matter," and it's that chapter where I try to show that when you get down to it, slavery is what brought that war on, brought the crisis on. If there had been no slavery, there would have been no war, there would have been no crisis, and you couldn't say that about any other issue that they were arguing about. The tariff issue was never going to tear the country apart, or the feeling of Southerners that Northerners were making too much money out of their cotton crops, and so on.

Lage: Now, did that represent a change or an evolution in your own thinking about the causes of the war?

Stamp: Oh, it was an evolution--it was something that I had been saying in my lectures and had written about. I wrote a chapter in my book *The Imperiled Union*, one chapter called "The Irrepressible Conflict." But this gave me more room and more space to develop my views. If you think of any great war, any great crisis, you can always find a place where it seems things get out of hand, and they acquire a kind of momentum, and it's hard to think how you could have stopped it. And 1857, to me, is that point, that after certain things happened in that year, and the Democratic party

blew up as a national organization, that meant there was no national political party left. And I don't really know how you could have stopped it after that.

Lage: So that's when it might have become inevitable.

Stampp: Yes. I don't like to use that word, but let's say it seemed to be a logical result of the things that happened. [laughter]

Lage: Okay. Well, let's stop now, and then we'll use next time to pick up all the pieces.

Stampp: Okay.

VIII HISTORIOGRAPHY AND TEACHING

[Interview 9: July 9, 1996] ##

"The Irrepressible Conflict": Slavery as the Cause of the Civil War

Lage: Today is July 9, 1996, and this is the final session of Ken Stamp's oral history. We're talking about the writing you did in the seventies and eighties. Let's start with *The Imperiled Union* (*Essays on the Background of the Civil War*, [New York: Oxford University Press, 1980]).

Stamp: Yes. This was published in 1980 by Oxford University Press, and it's a series of essays. One of them goes back to the 1940s, and another one that I see is out of the 1950s. The others are later. The others are 1960s and seventies. The seventh essay was one that--and it's the longest one--I wrote just for this book, and it's called "The Irrepressible Conflict." It's really about 30 percent of the book.

That is where I finally put together my idea of what caused the Civil War, and I dealt with some other kinds of interpretation, especially the interpretation of a group that called themselves the Revisionists. It's a silly word to use, since every revisionist is going to be revised.

Lage: What was their point of view?

Stamp: Well, as one of them described the Civil War, their point of view was essentially that it was a needless war--that was James G. Randall. Another one, Avery Craven, described the Civil War as a repressible conflict.

The idea of both of them and others who wrote in that vein, particularly during the 1930s, but it really goes back a lot further, is that there were no issues that could not have been compromised away or resolved. We had a civil war because we had a

group of irresponsible agitators and reckless politicians who used sectional differences for political gain, and ultimately, we got into a war as a result of the errors of what Randall called a blundering generation of politicians and agitators.

I think that's nonsense, and this is what I tried to say.

Lage: So you call it the irrepressible conflict.

Stamp: My basic argument is that the Civil War--you can think of all other kinds of issues, but the Civil War was fundamentally caused by the sectional issue on slavery. If there had been no slavery, there would have been no Civil War. You can keep slavery and subtract every other issue--the tariff issue and other issues of that sort--and there still would have been a Civil War. I talked to one of the historians who has a somewhat sophisticated variation of what's called the Revisionist point of view--who doesn't have many good things to say about the politicians of the 1850s--and I asked him whether, in his view, there could have been a Civil War without slavery, and he said, "No."

Lage: So it seems to be in agreement.

Stamp: What are we arguing about?

Lage: Did this group of Revisionists come from a certain point of view, a section or time period or political view?

Stamp: Most of them are Southerners. There are a couple of exceptions. James G. Randall was born in Indiana. He married a Virginia woman who was something of a historian herself and I think had a considerable influence on him. Avery Craven, the other distinguished one, is a North Carolinian. Most of the others, as I said, with just a few exceptions, were Southerners. So it was basically a Southern interpretation of the conflict.

The other school of the early twentieth century was one represented best by Charles A. Beard, and that is an economic interpretation. It was the economic differences between a growing industrialized society in the North and a basically agricultural society in the South, and the conflict between them.

Lage: But he didn't consider slavery an essential part of the--

Stamp: Slavery is hardly--no. Beard, and this is found best in his two-volume work called *Rise of American Civilization* [New York: Macmillan Co, 1927], Beard--Charles and Mary--they say very little about slavery. In this big work, there's no real analysis of slavery. They don't spend much time on abolitionists and

agitators. It's sort of the march of the Industrial Revolution and the more regressive areas in the South.

I thought that was very convincing when I was a graduate student in the thirties, but eventually it seemed less satisfying. I can tell you a very funny story. In graduate school in Madison in the 1930s, Beardianism was for most students the key to the understanding of American history. I remember a poor graduate student who took his M.A. oral exam in American history, and one of the questions thrown at him was, "What do you think caused the Civil War?" And he said, "I think slavery really caused the Civil War." That's very oversimplified. The graduate students sort of snickered about this naive young man, didn't really know what was going on. Well, he certainly has been vindicated in my eyes.

Lage: The professor who was examining him snickered at him? Or the fellow graduate students?

Stampp: Well, we heard later, and I don't remember how we found out, that the question had been asked, you see.

Lage: I see, the circle of graduate students.

Stampp: We all thought he was a rather naive young man. In many ways, he was, but certainly on that issue, I don't think he was all that naive.

Lage: You finished this particular book about 1979. Now, had you been thinking along these lines for a long time?

Stampp: I had been thinking all the time since my teaching in my upper division course, and my seminar always revolved around the sectional conflict, the old South, the crisis of the 1850s, Civil War, Reconstruction, the new South, and so on. I had been thinking about it, I guess, ever since I was in graduate school, because my dissertation was on an aspect of it, and so was my M.A. thesis.

It was 1979, when I was in England and had a visiting fellowship at All Souls College in Oxford, that I wrote that essay. Everything else was a matter of rewriting and revising, and quite a lot of revising and rewriting to get them ready for this book.

That was the one where I decided that here is the place and now is the time to finally explain what has developed in my mind about the cause of the Civil War. So it went into that book, and the book was finished by the summer of 1979. It went to Oxford and came out the next year.

"Southern Road to Appomattox": The Failure of the Confederacy

Lage: Then that final essay, which I think you have talked about a little bit, is certainly an interesting one.

Stampp: You mean "The Southern Road to Appomattox?"

Lage: "Southern Road to Appomattox," yes.

Stampp: That's something I thought about, too, quite a lot. I wrote that essay to be read as a paper or a lecture at the University of Texas at El Paso. Then I read it again somewhere else, I can't remember where, a revised version of it, and then I kept thinking about it and revising it, and then put it in this book. It's probably the most controversial essay--well, no, "The Irrepressible Conflict" is, too, but those are probably the two most controversial essays.

Lage: Just talk about the thesis of that one.

Stampp: The thesis is that among the reasons for the failure of the Confederacy, the defeat of the Confederacy, were two things: a kind of residue of Unionism among a great number of Southerners--I'm not talking about the ones who never supported the Confederacy. There were Unionists in western North Carolina and West Virginia and east Tennessee who never supported the Confederacy and did everything they could to sabotage the Confederate movement. I was talking really about Southerners who ostensibly supported the Confederacy, some perhaps at the beginning with some reluctance, but ultimately supported it, who never really completely shed their Unionism. Second, there was something I thought I picked up from reading the diaries and letters of slaveholding planters--that a great number of them never could reconcile their Christianity and their ethical standards and nineteenth-century conceptions of morality with slavery.

In part, it seemed to me that they protested too much. I remember the correspondence between two North Carolina slaveholders; they were good friends, they lived about 100 miles apart, they both were substantial slaveholders, owned 100 or so slaves, each of them. They kept writing back and forth, "Well, it seems to me that God put these people here for us to look after. They're not able to look after themselves." And then the other one would write back and say, "Yes, I agree with you," and it goes back and forth, and I wondered, "Why do you have to keep saying this if this is something you really believe? There's no reason why you have to keep repeating this litany."

Lage: It goes without saying, if you really believe it.

Stamp: That's right, exactly. And I found other slaveholders who really expressed their feelings of guilt about it. One said, "I guess I was never cut out to be a slaveholder," and another one says, "I feel guilty because they make so much money from me." You can find it in the press sometimes.

This led me to wonder whether that might be a partial explanation for the failure of the Confederacy: there was not the kind of deep commitment. The criticism of that is, look how hard the Confederate Army fought. And the answer to that, it seems to me, is that when you get confronted by an enemy, you jolly well had better fight. There were plenty of problems with morale in the Confederate Army, so it was not just defeatism late in the war.

It seems to me that in the end, Union soldiers with their commitment, not necessarily to antislavery, but with their commitment to the Union--granted again that there were desertions and periods of low morale--that the morale of the Union Army was superior to the morale of the Confederate Army.

It seemed to me that when you have a real commitment, a nationalistic commitment, your morale is stronger. You can find examples of it in twentieth-century history. In Algeria, for example, the French could never suppress the Algerians.

Lage: Or Vietnam.

Stamp: Or Vietnam, and plenty of others. Think about Poland and Polish nationalism which survived from the 1780s and '90s when Poland was partitioned, right on to the First World War. Polish nationalism never died. But what happened to Confederate nationalism? It was gone. Once the war was over, you find case after case of somebody saying, "Well, I think we had a right to do it, but I'm glad the war ended the way it did. And I'm glad we're rid of slavery. Slavery has been a burden on us." They were not talking about their morals or their guilt feelings but a physical burden of having to support it all.

Why didn't some of these Southern nationalists--alleged Southern nationalists--why didn't they go up to the hills and fight on?

Lage: A little guerrilla warfare.

Stampp: Yes. The only guerrilla warfare that occurred of any significance in the South was among Tennessee Unionists against the Confederacy. They took to the hills and drilled.

Lage: Very interesting point, and it seems to me it's well supported. But what was the reaction to that?

Stampp: Well, [laughs] everyone finds it very interesting, and they make it required reading and so on, but they just can't believe it. "How can you say that these Southerners, who grew up in slavery and took slavery as a matter of course, how can you say that there was a morale problem? Think how the Confederate Army fought." Well, it's interesting.

Lage: So it's not well accepted.

Stampp: Sometimes it's misunderstood. I never said that it was the cause. I simply said it was a significant factor in the collapse of the Confederacy.

Some accept it. In fact, two historians wrote a whole book about that and accepted my interpretation. So there was some support. But it's been fun. Some people get terribly indignant about it. [laughter]

Lage: Well, it's kind of fun to put forth ideas that challenge people's way of thinking.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: So that was interesting. I spent a little time this weekend looking at *The Imperiled Union*. It's a wonderful collection.

Stampp: Charlie Sellers had an essay, too, called "The Southerner as American," which developed one part of my thesis, and that is that the ideals of the Declaration of Independence were never repudiated in the South, never rejected, and the author of the Declaration of Independence is a Southerner. Some of the most ardent patriots--Patrick Henry and so on--were Southerners. The nationalist tradition never died completely in the South, I didn't think.

Lage: So that would create their doubts.

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: Was Charlie Sellers' essay after this or before?

Stampp: He wrote his before, yes, because I have footnote references. His mostly was on Southern nationalism. I put more emphasis--not that he didn't--I think I put somewhat more emphasis on the guilt about slavery than Charlie did, though he certainly did not ignore it.

Lage: Just bringing up Sellers, were your points of view similar or different? Did he teach about sectional conflict, too, or was his period earlier?

Stampp: No, he taught about the Jacksonian period, but there was inevitable overlap between my lectures on the background of the Civil War and his lectures on the Jacksonian period.

Lage: Did you have similar points of view, or good debates?

Stampp: I think usually. Charlie ran off in other directions late in his career. I sort of lost track of where he was going, but for a long time, I think Charlie and I were very close in our thinking about the background of the Civil War.

Lage: Did he run off to other interests, you mean, or new ideas about that same period?

Stampp: Charlie became a Marxist rather late in his career, long after I had abandoned it, Charlie discovered it.

Lage: Was this during the time of FSM?

Stampp: It was FSM--I really don't know all the things that went into it, and I don't want this to be an essay on Charlie Sellers. Charlie came here about 1957 or '58, and by the end of the 1960s, Charlie's thinking had changed a great deal. He was radicalized. He came here from Princeton, where he was an elder in the Presbyterian church, and became a rather different person.

I don't know if you ever saw his last book. He was very much interested in the importance of the so-called market revolution, which was something that economic historians emphasized considerably in the 1960s and seventies. The last book by Charlie became a rather eccentric one. [*The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]

The Huntington Library and America in 1857

Lage: You said you wanted to talk about your time at the Huntington Library writing *America in 1857*.

Stampp: Yes. They're connected because I went to the Huntington Library three times in the 1980s. The first time I went for just one month, and it was the month of January. I was very much impressed with the library and the way they dealt with scholars. I had an office and access to the stacks, and if I wanted to take a book up to my office, I simply filled out a little slip. I didn't have to bother with librarians, and I kept books there as long as I wanted to.

Then I went again a couple of years later for four months, and that was again largely research. There is a lot of stuff at the Huntington.

Lage: What kinds of collections do they have? Diaries and--?

Stampp: They have a lot of manuscript collections from all over. I'm constantly surprised at what the Huntington Library has picked up. They have a very good collection of printed sources as well, so I could use all the printed sources I needed at the Huntington, and then have all the advantages of the Huntington, one being that I had no telephone. [laughs] I got to my office at eight-thirty in the morning and worked until twelve, then went to their little lunch room and had lunch with the historians who were around. Then we usually took a half-hour walk through the gardens.

Lage: Which are lovely.

Stampp: Yes. Then back to my study by a little after one, and I stayed on until five, with absolutely no interruptions. It was marvelous.

I went back the last time in 1989 when I was actually writing, and I wrote most of *1857* at the Huntington Library. I think I had one more chapter to do after I left. I stayed from January through April--twice from January through April. So there are very good memories as far as working conditions, and the whole environment is wonderful. I got a lot of work done.

Lage: Sounds very civilized.

Stampp: It was, very civilized. I should add that my wife made this possible. We went down there with our dog, and Isabel took her for her walk and saw to it that I walked to the library in the morning. Then she would come and pick me up at five. She just

took care of everything. That's why I gave her the acknowledgement--well, she did a lot more for that book. She went with me on note-taking and always read and criticized.

Lage: Did she criticize with an eye to the language or--?

Stampp: Everything. She asked me questions about what I was saying, interpretations and so on, but also she was reading it for style, and she was a good critic. Passages that didn't seem clear to her I felt obviously needed to be rewritten if she couldn't understand them. So I think it was a nice time for both of us. I started the book before I retired, but most of the research was done after I retired. We were very close in the eighties after my retirement. We went everywhere together. She really was a major factor in my getting that book written.

Lage: That's nice. Sometimes that doesn't get acknowledged.

Stampp: Well, I acknowledged it, and I meant it, too. That wasn't just to make my wife feel good. Did you read it?

Lage: I haven't read that one because I couldn't find that one in the library.

Stampp: You didn't read--well, I'll read it to you. [gets book] This is the last paragraph of the preface. "The contribution of my wife Isabel to the research and writing of this book was so substantial as to approach collaboration. She accompanied me on research trips, assisted in note-taking, and was a thoughtful critic at all stages of the manuscript preparation. The book would never have been written without her support, and I am grateful for her remarkable patience." What I should have added is that she was taking care of all the possible distractions.

Lage: The dog--

Stampp: The dog and all the other distractions that one has at home.

The Lincoln Prize

Lage: That's very nice. Okay, the Lincoln Prize.

Stampp: Well, that came--[laughs] Look at the date.

Lage: It's right in front of us here, a really good-sized bust of Lincoln.

Stamp: Yes, 1993. This is a famous bust of Lincoln that's somewhere in Chicago and was done by a Frenchman named Augustus St. Gaudens. This was cast by some well-known company or artisan who does these things, and the winner of the prize gets one of those every year.

Lage: Is the winner always a historian?

Stamp: The Lincoln Prize is awarded by the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College, and the money came from two very wealthy men, Richard Gilder and Lewis Lehrman.

Lage: You were the third to receive the prize?

Stamp: I was the third. The first one went to Ken Burns, the man who did the film on the Civil War.

Lage: The documentary for public television?

Stamp: Yes.

Lage: That's really quite an honor.

Stamp: I think it was. It's a big prize; it's probably the biggest prize as far as money is concerned.

Richard Gilder and Louis Lehrman are the two angels who provide the money, and they subsidize the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College. These two men have given a lot of money to the Morgan Library and manuscripts to the Morgan Library in New York. So when they say to the Morgan Library, "We'd like to have a reception there," they have it. [laughter]

Lage: And is that where it was awarded?

Stamp: There's a reception before the dinner at the Morgan Library, and then they move from the Morgan Library to the New York Public Library, and there they have their big dinner and the award after the dinner.

Lage: Do you give a speech?

Stamp: You have to acknowledge, accept the award.

Lage: But not an academic--

Stamp: Well, I did give a speech about how I happened to write *The Peculiar Institution*, as a matter of fact.

Here's a picture after I received the prize. These are the two men; this man and this man are the ones, the angels, and this man is Gabor Boritt, a historian at Gettysburg College, who runs the institute. Who is this man in the middle? I don't know who he is.

Lage: Do you know who makes the choices?

Stampp: There is always a jury.

Lage: That is a wonderful honor.

Stampp: Yes.

Rethinking Former Views

Lage: Then you also gave a talk, a Moses Lecture, "My Life with Lincoln."

Stampp: Yes. That was published by the Berkeley Graduate Division.

Lage: It's in the Bancroft Library.

Stampp: Yes, I liked that confession of the erroneous views of my youth.

Lage: You do this a lot in your writing. It's a theme, to rethink your views.

Stampp: It is a theme, and I do it because this idea that you write history for the ages carved in stone is just plain nonsense. You had better realize that what you write may be great stuff when you write it, but it's not always going to look that way over time.

Lage: There would be no work for historians.

Stampp: It still can be fine literature. One ought to and one does read Henry Adams and his history, and Charles A. Beard--Charles Beard is a classic because of his expounding of an economic interpretation of history. Although it may be superseded, it's still important, and it's a milestone on the historical development of our views today.

Obviously, we don't know who is going to be important and what topics are going to be important twenty-five years from now, and this I know from my own experience. So I keep harping on it as something we ought to be aware of.

Lage: And probably the best way to do it is to show how your own views have changed.

Stamp: I didn't think I should take another historian and say, "Look at this and then look at that." I thought, do it yourself and give your own experience.

Looking at Lincoln

Lage: I haven't read *My Life With Lincoln* (Berkeley: Graduate Division, 1983) for a while, so I can't remember precisely the points you made. You had been less forgiving of him or judged him more harshly earlier?

Stamp: In my radical days, Lincoln struck me as a kind of bourgeois politician who wasn't really antislavery in any significant sense. He was a racist, and there's plenty of evidence of that. I was inclined in those pacifist days to throw a lot of the responsibility on him for the Civil War.

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Stamp: Lincoln sent a relief expedition down to Fort Sumter and did not do it in the most peaceful way. He told the governor of South Carolina that he was only sending in supplies, but then he added "at this time." That's provocative. I mean, that's not the least provocative way. So I felt that Lincoln had sort of cynically maneuvered the Southerners into firing the first shot so he would get the benefit of merely defending the Union in the face of aggression.

Well, there are other ways of looking at it too. Another way of looking at it is simply that Lincoln was a nationalist, Lincoln felt it was his duty as president to preserve the Union, and if he had to do it, he would be an idiot not to do it in a way that would be most beneficial to him. In other words, let them take the responsibility for firing the first shot.

Lage: It's a matter of judgment.

Stamp: It's a little different way of looking at it, you know, from the rather censorious way that I took in the thirties, with a lot of other historians, too.

Lage: Did you soften your judgment of his racial views or his views about slavery?

Stamp: I wrote an article comparing Lincoln and Douglas, and the question was, was there a difference between the two? Did it matter which one was elected senator in 1858? I used the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Yes, the article is called "Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party." I used Lincoln and Douglas, and I compared them.

And there was a difference, there was a significant difference. For one thing, Lincoln didn't want to talk about race. It was not to his advantage. He was talking to a very racist audience in Illinois. Douglas brought it up all the time. He was the one who kept bringing it up and calling Lincoln a nigger-lover and an abolitionist.

Finally, Lincoln made a momentous statement. He said, "This question has been brought up and brought up. If you want me to say what I think, I'll say that there is a difference between the black and white race, and I am as much in favor as anyone else of having the superior position assigned to the white race, and I don't believe in making voters of them or letting them serve on juries or making citizens of them." That's pretty awful.

Lage: Yes. Considering that just a few years later, the three amendments--

Stamp: That's right. But there were other things that he said in those debates that were very different. He said, "I don't see what the point is of these arguments about this race and that race and the other race being superior," and other things that mitigated what he said. He was never the aggressive racist that Douglas was, and he always made that famous additional statement, that as far as the bread--how did it go?--the black man was as entitled as the white man to the fruits of his labor. On that score, he said, "He is my equal and Mr. Douglas' equal and everybody's equal."

Lage: He said that in the debates?

Stamp: In the debates, that's right.

Another difference was, Lincoln insisted that blacks were included in the statements in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights.

Lincoln said, "I know we're not there yet, but the Declaration of Independence holds up an ideal that we ought to be working toward over the years." Douglas said, "The Declaration of Independence never was intended to apply to black men. It didn't

apply to Fiji Islanders or the red Indians or black men or any other race, except the white race." There's a difference.

Lage: There's a big difference there, yes.

Stampp: That's the burden of my argument there, and that is a big change from what I was thinking in the 1930s.

Lage: Well, that was a nice piece, I thought, nicely crafted, in *My Life With Lincoln*.

"Rebels and Sambos" and the Black Culture

Lage: I wanted to talk a little more in depth about this. *The Peculiar Institution* is sometimes criticized on the grounds that you underestimate the vitality of the black culture.

Stampp: Yes. I haven't changed very much on that. I wrote another essay, and it's in this book, in which I address some of the critics on that. The title of that article is "Rebels and Sambos: The Search for the Negro's Personality in Slavery." This is really an argument against Stanley Elkins's book on slavery. I went to some of his sources, his psychological sources; I didn't think he had used them properly, and I quoted other things. Harry Stack Sullivan, for example, has some generalizations that simply don't fit Elkins' thesis about the typical Negro being truly a Sambo.

Lage: He wasn't arguing for much black culture either, was he?

Stampp: No, but this is the argument. The others, [Eugene] Genovese, [John] Blassingame, who is a black historian--I think it's to a considerable extent wishful thinking.

Lage: What about Levine? Lawrence Levine's work on spirituals and--

Stampp: Yes. Okay, I think he's more persuasive than Genovese. My generalization is that the black slave was sort of dangling between an African culture and a white culture, and much of their black culture was losing its validity. There were no institutions, no social institutions to maintain the standards that one associates with any culture. You've got to have some kind of coercive institutions, and there weren't any.

Lage: When you say coercive, you mean schools?

Stampp: Well, let's take our white culture. We've heard a great deal about "family values" lately, but in the nineteenth century, we had all kinds of sanctions for those who violated the traditional ideas of what a family ought to be.

The blacks didn't. Every black family was in a precarious situation, because it could be broken up, and they were frequently broken up. The father was not the head of the family. If there was a head, it was probably the mother more than the father. The father was not the head of the family because he was not the ultimate authority in the family.

The ultimate authority was the overseer or the owner, who could contradict the father, who could punish the father in front of his children, and children frequently saw their mother or their father punished, corporally punished. The fact that the family could be broken up--there were no laws preventing the breaking up of families. When the master died, there was uncertainty among the slaves about whether their families were going to be kept together or whether they weren't.

All of that, I thought, put them in this never-never land. The whites held up their moral standards to the blacks, but these standards had little meaning to them. Their idea of moral behavior is helping to conceal a runaway, not turn him in. Theft was not an immoral thing to do. As one slave once said, "I'm not stealing. I'm property; I'm just transferring some of the property."

Lage: What about the black culture and religion?

Stampp: As I pointed out in that essay on "Rebels and Sambos," I dealt with slave religion in two ways. I think we talked about this before.

Lage: We did, a little bit.

Stampp: Yes. I emphasized religion as a means of protest by the slaves through their spirituals and folk songs and so on, and religion as a vehicle of discipline. What was drummed into the slaves was their religious obligation to obey their masters--Christ said to obey masters. What I didn't bring out was Christianity as a religion of solace, and the parts of the Christian doctrine that slaves could take and find ways of making themselves feel good about themselves. All men, and no slaveholder would deny this, all men (and women, they should have said) are equal in the sight of God. Doing what you're supposed to do is a virtue--obeying your master, doing your job--and you'll get your reward.

This was a way of disciplining slaves, a technique of control, but it was also, it seems to me now and for some years, a terribly important way of reconciling slaves. Maybe it's a bad thing to--

Lage: Or helping them to do it.

Stampp: But it's a way of reconciling slaves to their lot in life.

I didn't say that they had no culture at all, and I didn't say there were no African survivals. There were, but not all that many.

Lage: It's interesting because that debate goes on even today.

Stampp: I simply don't agree with Melville Herskovitz.

Lage: You don't agree with whom?

Stampp: Melville Herskovits, an anthropologist who was fascinated by the African survivals among blacks even in the twentieth century, and I think he exaggerated. Genovese sees the seeds of black nationalism in slave days. I can't see this, I just can't.

Lage: Of black nationalism?

Stampp: Of black nationalism.

I think after the Civil War, blacks withdrew from the white churches and finally built up a social institution of their own--that is, the church--as a vehicle for self-expression and for cherishing whatever was left of their black culture, and possibly in the long run developing a kind of feeling of black nationalism. I think it was pretty much the twentieth century, though, before that became a major force among blacks. It seems to me these are post-Civil War developments.

Lage: Did families that had been in slavery stay together after the Civil War?

Stampp: After slavery? By and large, yes, and lots of them went back to find members of their family who had been moved somewhere else.

Current Themes in History and the Neglect of Political History

Lage: I brought this along because I thought this was very interesting, the essays in your honor by your students, *Perspectives on Race and Slavery in America*.

Stampp: Well, I like what Rob Abzug wrote; what he said about my slavery book I think is right.

Lage: He had a lot of other interesting comments about your work, one being that you have this larger national vision of American history rather than the particular--the local, the race, the ethnic.

Stampp: Yes. Well, I've done both, actually. As far as regional history is concerned, that's old--the history of the West, history of the South, histories of New England.

Lage: Or history of a locality.

Stampp: And history of localities--just look back through the *American Historical Review* or the *Journal of American History*, you'll find a lot of local history going way back to the twenties.

Lage: He's saying that you emphasize what's common more often.

Stampp: Well, I think I did, but I did some local history myself. My doctoral dissertation was a study of Indiana during the Civil War. That's local history, and certainly I've done a lot of regional history and sectional history--the South.

One question you raised was what I think about gender history and--what else do you have there?

Lage: Ethnic.

Stampp: Ethnic. Well, I think they're all valuable, and certainly there was a need to bring women into history far more than they were in my early days. The work that's been done in black history was necessary, but I've wanted it in a context, a national context. My ultimate hope in the writing and teaching of history is to bring in these groups that have been ignored in the past--women and ethnic groups--into the texture of American history. I think there are some values that we do share in our American culture, and thank goodness for it, because we would be flying in all directions if we didn't.

I'm a little upset--I should say a lot more than a little upset--about the present neglect of political history. It's ridiculous. I look at the program of the OAH, and I see page after page of gender history and ethnic history and--

Lage: [laughs] Literary theory history.

Stamp: Histories of cleanliness--marriage in American history, divorce in American history--these are all interesting subjects, but three days of papers, about ten papers a day--and nobody is writing about political history any more, as if it isn't important. Of course it is very important.

Lage: And of course, that's not all you wrote about either.

Stamp: I didn't write political history exclusively. My slavery book has no politics in it at all, no political history, and my historiographical writings are not focused entirely on political history.

One day, somebody is going to give a presidential address before the American Historical Association on the neglected aspect of American history: political history.

Lage: And then the pendulum will swing.

Stamp: Yes. Most of the political history that's being done right now, almost the only, is by the new political historians who are interested in election returns. My student Bill Gienapp is a good example. They tend to put very heavy emphasis on religious, ethnic, and cultural factors in politics, so that it ultimately becomes something more than traditional political history.

Lage: Maybe that's what the new political history will contribute, the incorporation of gender and ethnic and cultural history in political history.

Stamp: Well, if they help, that's fine. Unfortunately, a number of them seem to feel that the computer is sort of Open Sesame and everything is going to fall into place and going to be simple. I think the new political historians have made a tremendous contribution in making historians think a lot more about the kind of informal quantification that they were always doing without knowing it--when they talk about few, most, the overwhelming majority. I don't think we thought often enough about what we were talking about when we say "many." Are you saying 20 percent, 25 percent? You don't always have to be that specific, and I think sometimes these quantifiers get more specific than their data justifies.

That, I think, is a major contribution. There are many things that you cannot say 25 percent or 30 percent for, but you really ought to be thinking about what you do mean. If you say "the great majority," what are you talking about? Is that 70 percent? You ought to have in your own mind some idea--I'm thinking about maybe two-thirds, or 80 percent, 90 percent, even if you don't use those terms.

Lage: Or if you look at an individual diary, how do you talk about it as being representative?

Stampp: You've got to use your judgment on that. And you can be very dishonest about it. You can say, "This is the way it was," and then generalize from a quote from Charles Francis Adams or someone, and that's just misusing evidence.

Lage: Which happens whatever type of history you write.

Stampp: Yes.

An Epic and Tragic Sense

Lage: [Robert H.] Abzug also talks about your "epic and tragic senses." Is that something you yourself think of consciously?

Stampp: Not very often, I think. [laughter] I do have a tragic sense. This gets me into my religious thought. I'm an agnostic. I don't really think that there's any great master purpose that we are a part of. I think we're all caught up in a kind of tragedy. That leads me to some ethical values, especially that if we all are caught up in this human tragedy, we should not make things worse for others. It ought to give us some compassion even for people like Richard Nixon--that stretches my compassion to the ultimate limit. But if I try terribly hard, I can look at the man and his background and understand a little bit about what made him the disagreeable person he was.

Lage: Well, it seems to me a study of history does lend itself to feeling that way.

Stampp: I think so, I think so.

Lage: Your writing shows compassion, even for the slaveholders in some respect.

Stampp: Yes, as long as it's kept in perspective. Let's not shed too many tears for the slaveholders when the slaves were the ones who were the real victims of the institution. But one can understand--and I think I can from reading their diaries--there were slaveholders who showed no sign of guilt feelings about slavery, but there were lots of slaveholders who were really troubled by the things that they had to do to maintain slavery, and for them, one ought to have some compassion.

One ought to bear in mind that there is something to be understood about being born with an institution like that. Those born in 1820 didn't start it. Remember racial feelings of Northerners who weren't surrounded by this sea of blacks, and the fear that they had that abolition of slavery might lead to great hordes of blacks going North. Ultimately, they did, and many Northerners weren't happy about it. I think if one reads deeply into the records, one does develop some compassion for all the characters that we study.

Lage: Right, on both sides, as you say, even Richard Nixon.

Stampp: Yes. Don't press me on that. [laughter]

Lage: Okay. You must have enjoyed Watergate, then.

Stampp: Oh, I loved it.

Working with Graduate Students

Lage: Let's talk about teaching, too, because that comes out in this book. We have talked somewhat about your lectures to undergraduates, but what about graduate students--who you've taught, how you've taught?

Stampp: I liked running what used to be called--are there still courses called 201, graduate reading courses?

Lage: I think so.

Stampp: Graduate reading courses. I enjoyed those, and gave them fairly regularly, and I enjoyed seminars. That was probably the part of teaching I loved most--especially in later years. When I was young, I liked lecturing to undergraduates, and during the first fourteen years I was here I taught the survey course in American history.

Lage: Fourteen years?

Stampp: After fourteen years, I felt sort of worn out, and I thought it was time to turn it over to someone else. I was pretty good at it when I started, but I began to feel that I was not doing it as well.

Lage: Did you tend to redo your lectures or just kind of give the same lectures each time?

Stampp: Well, no. I think if you're alive, your lectures change. I never just sat down and said, "Now, I'm going to write a whole new set of lectures." They kept changing and changing, and I kept putting new things in and taking things out, revising. That's something that just keeps going on.

But less so in the survey course. It is so general. It's in your advanced courses. My course on the old South, for example, which I enjoyed particularly. I started off when I first began teaching that course by arguing my conviction that slavery was an unprofitable institution, and then I found that it was profitable, and I had to change it completely. A lot of other things I revised that way.

I did like lecturing to my upper division course, and I think I continued to be pretty good in that course.

Seminars here were very different from what I told you about at Wisconsin--having to stay in the same seminar with your major professor. That wasn't true here. Well, I had a lot of students who took my seminar who never worked with me. They might be working in ancient history, but they had to take a seminar in some other field. I was interested in their knowing the sources, and in the early weeks, I would have them look into sources--1850s newspapers or manuscripts or whatever--to get something of the flavor of the period and have them write little reports or give oral reports on them.

As far as my graduate students--apart from seminars, the ones who wrote dissertations with me--I think I was very flexible. I let students work on whatever they wanted, if I thought they had found a subject that had some promise in it. I had one student who wrote a book on Irish immigration to the United States. It started in my seminar; he wrote a seminar paper on relations between Irish immigrants and free blacks in New York City. Somehow, that got him interested in the Irish, and it went on and on, and the next thing I knew, he was writing a book on Irish immigration.

Lage: Under your tutelage?

Stampp: Yes, and it's a very good book.

I never tried to impose an interpretation. There is no such thing as a Stampp school of Civil War historiography.

Lage: Was that in reaction to Hesselstine, or just your own--

Stampp: It might be, I hadn't thought of that. Maybe it was. I just didn't feel that I should do that. Bill Gienapp, for example, in his book on the origins of the Republican party; some of his interpretations I disagree with, but he makes an awfully good case. He's one of these new historians who emphasize ethnic and religious differences as determining political behavior. He makes a good case. I don't agree with it entirely, but it's a good case.

Lage: What do you do when you're supervising a dissertation and you simply don't agree with the student?

Stampp: There's a difference between saying, "This argument is not clear. It doesn't strike me as persuasive." Bill's arguments--he makes good cases for them, and that's fine. But there is a difference between somebody who is just confused and somebody who has a coherent conception about how people behave and some evidence.

Dissertations: Problems with Prose

Stampp: There were several students who began writing dissertations with me who I concluded just didn't have the talent--lots of problems with prose; they simply didn't have the talent to write an interesting and original piece of work. I told them they had better quit, and they did.

Lage: Did you do that more than most professors, or is that fairly common?

Stampp: I don't know. I don't think I've ever asked anyone.

Lage: That must be a hard thing to tell somebody.

Stampp: Terribly hard, terribly hard. Oddly enough, there were a few whom I labored with, and they finally got degrees, and then they never did anything, and I just wondered, Why on earth did I spend all the time?

Lage: Right. They might have been better off--

Stampp: --doing something else. And there were several students who simply never finished. Oh, how many? [counts] Probably half a dozen.

Lage: Never finished because you told them--

Stampp: Well, I just told them, "I don't think you're going to write a--." One of the saddest cases was somebody who left and got a job teaching at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. He got leave to come back to Berkeley to write his dissertation. He was here--I can't remember whether it was for the whole year or half a year. Anyway, after he was back here for a couple of months, his work was no better. I told him, "You're just not going to--you can try someone else, but you're not going to write a dissertation that I'm going to approve." One problem was prose. It's appalling how many students get past their M.A. and have trouble writing clear sentences.

Lage: Now, is that something you saw change over time? A lot of people say, "Oh, back in the old days, everybody wrote well."

Stampp: Not here. I'll tell you, the students I remember back in the forties and early fifties were worse than the ones now. There was a real difference--I ran a seminar at Harvard, and I ran two seminars at Oxford, and these students had preparation in composition. I remember, especially at Oxford, I could read their papers and never worry about their prose.

##

Stampp: There are students who come to the university who never did anything but multiple choice or true-false tests, never had to write an essay.

Lage: Right. We don't get the very cream of the crop, like Harvard does.

Stampp: No, but the crop is creamier now than it was when I first came here.

Lage: Do you want to talk in particular about any of your graduate students over the years who you've either been particularly close to or proud of?

Stampp: I was proud of practically all of those who got degrees ultimately and wrote dissertations. I can think of only two that weren't

published, but the rest of them all got their dissertations published, and I think that's very good indeed.

Lage: Would you spend a lot of time reading it? Getting them to revise it, back and forth like that?

Stamp: Oh, yes indeed, and a lot of time on prose. I would do a lot of rewriting for them--I would do it for a few pages, and say, "Now, look. Read the pages that I have copyedited, and then I hope you'll see from that what's wrong with the way you're writing." Usually it worked.

I remember--I'm not going to mention names--I remember one student, though, whose dissertation was eventually published and is quite good, but the prose was just terrible. I usually told the students, "Please give me your dissertation chapter by chapter, so that if there are problems in composition, you'll find them out at the beginning." Instead of doing that, he sent me the whole manuscript. I wrote to him and said, "It's just got to be totally rewritten. This is just not passable prose." Two weeks later, it was all back. He had tinkered with it a little bit. I had to write back and say, "You don't understand. This is not well enough written for me to accept it and sign it."

Lage: He was off site, I can see.

Stamp: Yes, he was somewhere in the East, I can't remember where at the time.

So I didn't get it then for several months, and finally it came back in readable form. I don't know whether he had somebody help him, but fine if somebody helped him.

I had another student who should have dropped out because his prose was terrible. I kept working at it and working at it. Ultimately, he got his Ph.D., went off to New Mexico, Highlands University, I've never heard of him or from him since. He went away angry with me for being so persnickety, so that was a bad deal.

Lage: Now, you emphasize prose a lot.

Stamp: I do.

Lage: Did you have as much trouble with use of sources and reasoning?

Stamp: Yes. I didn't have problems with all of them. I had a number of students whose prose--Bill Gienapp, Bob Abzug, Bill [William H.] Freehling, Jack [John C.] Sproat, Leon [Litwack]--I had very

little problem with them. Oh, and Mark Summers and Kerby Miller. Who else? Well, quite a lot of them.

Lage: Who wrote well?

Stampp: Who wrote at least quite passable prose. Then there were some others--I had one student whose dissertation with some reluctance I approved of, but I told him, "This is not ready for publication." He sent it off to a university press, and I wondered about the ethics of it, but I decided I had to protect my reputation. I wrote to them and said, "I did not tell him to send this to you, because I don't think it's ready for publication," and they did reject it. I had to think of other students, and I wanted to make sure they understood that I had not told him to send it, I had not recommended it.

Lage: Because that might be an expectation.

Stampp: Because my reputation as a critic might be questioned, and that might do damage to other students of mine. So I did do that. Incidentally, his dissertation was never published. That was one that was never published. He never could get it into shape for publication.

John G. Sproat

Lage: Was it Jack Sproat who wrote the short biography of you that you sent to me [from *Twentieth-Century American Historians*, vol. 17, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 1983]?

Stampp: Yes.

Lage: Tell me about him. He was an early student, wasn't he?

Stampp: He was an early student. He's a veteran of World War II. He was born in San Jose, grew up in San Jose, went to San Jose State as an undergrad before the war. I think he's only nine years younger than I am.

Lage: So he was one of those returning veterans without too much age difference.

Stampp: That's right, and he's a charming man. He wrote a very good dissertation which was published eventually. It was his wife who nagged him into publishing it finally. He had to do some revising. We have been very good friends. He just--he's retired

now--just celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday. When I was teaching at Harvard and he was doing research on his dissertation in 1955, he came to Massachusetts and stayed with us for a week or more, I guess, while he was doing research there.

I got to know him very well, and in the sixties my wife got to know his wife. He had had a divorce and remarried. My wife, Isabel, and his wife Ruth were very close. They were on the Atlantic Coast and we on the Pacific Coast, but they communicated by telephone and letters. His wife, Ruth, said, "Well, she's my best friend, and we're like sisters." I like Jack, I'm very fond of him. I wish he had kept doing research.

He wrote a very good book on reform, middle-class reformers in the late nineteenth century called *The Best Men* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), first-rate. Then he went years doing very little. He recently did a book in collaboration with another man on banking in South Carolina, which is interesting.

Lage: Is that where he teaches, South Carolina?

Stampp: He taught at the University of South Carolina, was head of the department, and then continued as a professor there for, I guess the last twenty years. He taught at Lake Forest College before that. He taught at Williams for a while.

Lage: Is any of it the atmosphere at the school where they work? Does Cal kind of promote keeping your nose to the grindstone?

Stampp: Well, it should. It doesn't as much as it ought to sometimes, but that's what theoretically it's supposed to do.

Lage: Now, if I remember correctly from that bio Jack wrote, he made the remark that you had mellowed, particularly after your second marriage.

Stampp: [laughs] Oh, my students always tell me that I've mellowed. I probably have.

Lage: Towards your students, it sounded like he meant, that maybe you weren't as hard a taskmaster.

Stampp: Yes. I don't think my standards were changed, but I might have been a little softer in the way I would criticize. Yes, I think my wife helped mellow me.

Lage: Well, it's kind of nice to hear that said about yourself, probably.

Stampp: Right. As long as it doesn't mean what it might mean. Mellow might be overripe or something. [laughter]

Lage: Anything else you want to say about your graduate students or teaching?

Stampp: They were wonderful. I suppose more than anything else, they have made all the work and all the time I spent worthwhile.

Lage: Did they ever send you off in new directions in your thinking or research?

Stampp: Oh, they certainly did, and they certainly made me think about things that--Bill Gienapp certainly had an impact on me, Bill Freehling has had an impact, Rob Abzug has had an impact on me. I used to have my graduate students come out a couple of times a term to the house, and we had a buffet supper. Each time, somebody had a paper to read. I think sometimes they were not all that happy about all these papers they had, but they were related to their dissertation, so it wasn't something different.

I remember those evenings, and they do, too, very well. They remember my wife and her hospitality. Those were evenings when we had interchanges, and that's when I learned a great deal from them.

Lage: There really does seem to be a synergy between the teaching and the research.

Stampp: Right. Oh, I think so.

Lage: If you were just a research historian--you don't hear of research historians too often.

Stampp: No, and I keep in touch with most of my former students, though I've lost contact with a few.

Lage: Will a lot of them be at the seminar on *The Peculiar Institution* in the fall?

Stampp: Well, Little Rock isn't the most attractive place, even if Bill Clinton might be there then. I don't know how many will get there. I know Jack Sproat will be there, and probably Leon because he's an inveterate convention-goer. He hasn't had enough of it yet. Who else will be there, I don't know.

IX RETIREMENT AND FAMILY

Thoughts on Retirement: Making the Transition

Lage: Do you have any thoughts about what it's like to be retired?

Stampp: Well, for me, retirement was difficult, because I like teaching. I sort of dreaded retirement. The retirement age when I was supposed to retire was sixty-seven.

Lage: At that time, was it mandatory?

Stampp: Well, the transition was just taking place to put it up to seventy. Now you can teach as long as you like, I suppose. I didn't want to retire at sixty-seven. The university at that time offered something called phased retirement. They were worried that if they made us retire at sixty-seven, they might get in trouble with the federal government, so they had this phased retirement program, and I went into that. So the last three years, I taught 40 percent time. That helped. It helped the transition.

When I was fully retired here, I went right off the next term and taught at Williams College for a term, and I did that because I had never taught in a small liberal-arts college. I knew it was different, and I wanted to see whether I could do it, coming out of state universities. I did my own work in state universities, did all my teaching in state universities--Arkansas, Maryland, Berkeley--and even in visiting--Harvard wasn't a state university, but it was a big university. So I enjoyed the term at Williams College very much, very good students. It was a nice transition.

Lage: Were they small classes?

Stampp: Small classes--I lectured to thirty-five students instead of 150, and that was nice.

When I finished at Williams, I was well into this last book, and then I was sort of glad. I could now for the first time just think about that book and work on the book. So I think the real tough thing was finishing that book.

I finished in 1989. I went into a depression. I really went into a depression. I knew I was not going to write another book. I had known a number of historians who wrote one too many books, and I was not going to do that.

Lage: Now, why did you feel that way, that you wouldn't write another book?

Stamp: Well, that book, 1857, again dealt with a lot of problems that I had wrestled with over the years, chapters on some problems, topics that I wanted to write about, and I just felt that I shouldn't.

I'll give you one reason. The kind of books that I wrote involved lots of travel to Eastern libraries, and I didn't really feel like spending three weeks at Cambridge and a month in New York and a month in the South. I just didn't feel like doing it. So that was it.

So I knew I had written my last book, and I wasn't going to teach any more. I began, "What are you going to do?" and I went into a bit of a depression. I went to my doctor and told him that I was feeling very down, and he was awfully helpful. He said, "You'll get over it." And I did.

Lage: Sometimes that's all you need to hear.

Isabel's Illnesses

Stamp: Yes. Then--my wife's first physical problem was breast cancer, which she found out she had in the summer of 1990, and that was not long after the book was finished. I began to put more and more of my time into--she had a succession of things. She had a lumpectomy, and after that she had to have radiation and chemotherapy, because there had been metastasis into some lymph nodes. So I was doing a lot of the shopping and work around the house and so on.

Soon after that, she had an acute case of what's called spinal stenosis. It's caused by arthritis. It's a narrowing of

the canal in your spinal cord, and she was beginning to feel numbness in her thigh. That led to more surgery.

Lage: Oh, dear, she had so many problems these last few years.

Stampp: Yes, it was the last five and a half years, and it was just one thing after another. The back surgery was very tricky, because if he had made a little slip and cut a nerve, it would have meant some paralysis in her leg. Anyway, it took a long time to recuperate from it. Then not long after that--she had had a problem with atrial fibrillation for a long time, and she would go into the hospital. They have a shock treatment for stopping your heart and then starting it again in rhythm. This would be okay for five years or so, and then about 1993, '94, they couldn't get it back into rhythm any more. Some people are able to live with it, but she couldn't.

Lage: It's not something a pacemaker could resolve.

Stampp: That was ultimately the solution. So that's more surgery. With the pacemaker--this is relatively new, using it--there are electrocardiologists who do this, and it seemed to me they were always tinkering with it. They would decide it was a little too fast or a little too slow. So that happened, and I thought, okay, we're in the clear now. She had gone almost five years with no recurrence of breast cancer, and she had this surgery for her spinal stenosis, and now her heart was in rhythm.

Then the next thing that happened--last fall, she began to feel very breathless, and I thought, well, it's just the pacemaker. Go see your doctor and have him redo it. But the doctor said, "It's not the pacemaker. You have a heart valve which is leaking," they call it regurgitation--it didn't close. Well, that really was a blow because that meant open-heart surgery. It was last fall, she was feeling--she tired very easily.

In early January, they decided she had to have surgery to replace the valve, and that was almost the last straw for both of us, I think. She had the surgery in February, and the surgeon told me it was a complete success, and she stayed in the hospital for a week after that. Both her cardiologist and her surgeon said, "She's doing wonderfully well. She's progressing faster than normal." She came home, and she lived for four weeks. There was some little problem, it had to do with her pacemaker. She was beginning to accumulate fluid. But that was something you can take care of. Then early in the morning of March 8, she died in her sleep.

Lage: More or less unexpected.

Stampp: While I was away after her death, I began thinking about this. Her death at that time was unexpected. That was a terrible shock, because everyone thought she was over the critical period. But I began thinking about the whole five and a half years.

Lage: Yes, how much can a body take?

Stampp: Yes, exactly. She was still not out of the trouble zone because her arthritis was still very bad. When she was in the hospital after the surgery, she told me, "Well, you know, the pain from the surgery is nothing compared to the pain I have from arthritis."

Lage: Oh, dear.

Stampp: Her right thigh was getting numb again, and later I began to think maybe the time had come for her to die. That's hard to think of, but it just seemed--in that context, her death was not all that sudden. There had certainly been enough warning.

Lage: The five year kind of warning.

Stampp: Yes, enough warning about it. But--

Lage: It's still hard to take.

Stampp: It's hard to take. It's hard to take. We were so close.

Lage: Did the trip to Europe--we don't have to keep this is on if it seems so personal--was that a good thing for you, or was it hard?

Stampp: I don't know. I went to see her brother, whom I like very much, and spent three days with him in southwestern England, in lovely hilly area. I like him, and we went for two long walks up into the hills, and then one half day we spent at Wells Cathedral near Bristol, not far, maybe thirty miles from Bristol. Wells is one of the really marvelous cathedrals. It's, they say, the only purely Gothic cathedral in England.

Going to Switzerland, where Isabel and I went on our honeymoon and many times after that, was not the greatest idea. Everything was beautiful, the flowers--we used to go to see the flowers in June. My wife loved the wildflowers. I had some very nice walks, but--.

Lage: It's putting yourself through a lot to do that.

Stampp: Yes. There were far too many ghosts.

Lage: Yes. Maybe a couple more years.

Stampp: Maybe. I thought I wouldn't go back there again.

The Four Children

Lage: Now, mention just what your children are doing. We talked at some length about one of your daughters. I don't think any of it was recorded.

Stampp: Well, we have four children. I told you that my wife had a child by a previous marriage. I had two children by a previous marriage, and we had our own daughter. Isabel's daughter is a clinical psychologist who specializes in cases of brain damage and spinal damage.

Lage: And what is her name?

Stampp: Michele. She has the name of her father, her real father, who happens to live in Toronto, where she lives. Her name is McCartney-Filgate. She now has a private practice and is doing very well. She's married to a lawyer, and they do fine.

My son got a B.A. in Berkeley and an M.A. at Berkeley, and was doing Ph.D. work in aesthetics and philosophy. For some reason or other he didn't finish. I don't know why.

Lage: Is he Ken also?

Stampp: Ken, Kenneth.

Lage: So he was in philosophy?

Stampp: Yes, but he majored in history as an undergrad.

Lage: At Cal?

Stampp: At Cal.

Lage: Was that difficult?

Stampp: No. I wanted him to go somewhere else, but he wouldn't. I tried to get him to go to Dartmouth, I tried to get him to go to Wisconsin--anywhere out of Berkeley, for heaven's sakes, but he wouldn't leave Berkeley. He finally got a job at Capwell's, and for a while he sold shoes at Capwell's. He's still working at

what used to be Capwell's, Macy's now. He does advertising writing for them, and he also teaches staff. He runs seminars for new staff, showing them how to use the computer system. So that's what he does. He's unmarried, living with his mother.

My daughter, Sally, went to Santa Barbara. I persuaded her to get out of Berkeley for two years anyway. She went to Santa Barbara for two years and then came back here.

Lage: There's an attraction. My daughter is here, too.

Stampp: They love Berkeley. She majored in psychology, as Michele did, and got her B.A. and got a Ph.D. in psychology in Berkeley. She got a job at St. Mary's College and has been there ever since, and been very successful as a teacher. She's been living for fifteen years with a young lady--not all that young, upper forties--who is a school psychologist. They're wonderful, and this is absolutely right for both of them. They met somehow; they lived close together. It makes me happy to see them because they are so obviously happy together.

Lage: Oh, that's good.

Stampp: And Jenny, our daughter, who is now thirty-three, graduated from Santa Barbara. She went away. It's not really the place I wanted her to be, but that's where she decided to go. She majored in psychology, so I have three daughters in psychology.

Lage: Gee, you've got a lot of interest in psychology in the family.

Stampp: Yes. She was thinking about doing graduate work and then decided not to. She had another job somewhere, but she has had a job now for some years at a private school in El Cerrito--Prospect School --grades one through six, and they're thinking of possibly running it on through ninth grade.

Lage: So she teaches?

Stampp: She did a bit, but she's running the office there, and she puts out their newsletter, or whatever it is, and runs their computer and does their payroll, and she loves it. She has a boyfriend, a sort of semi-live-in boyfriend. She has her own apartment, but they're together all weekend. One of these years, she might get married, I don't know.

Lage: Are there any other thoughts that come to mind?

Stampp: I don't know of anything more to say.

Lage: Okay. I think when you look at the transcript, if there's something we haven't covered, there will be a chance at that point.

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APPENDIX

"Commemorating Stampp," from California Monthly, March-April, 1984.

Commemorating Stamppp

The end of an era was marked last December 30 when friends and former students of Kenneth M. Stamppp gathered at Jack's restaurant in San Francisco to celebrate his retirement from the Berkeley history department. Scheduled to coincide with the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, the dinner was organized by Stephen E. Maizlish '67, Ph.D. '78, and Robert H. Abzug, Ph.D. '77, and brought together 27 people whose association with Stamppp reached all the way back to his graduate school days at the University of Wisconsin.

As the guests raised their glasses, two different Stamppps emerged. Students of the 1950s remembered a rigorous and exacting mentor who drove his proteges to their limits. "You've been a tough commissar," declared Leon F. Litwack '51, M.A. '52, Ph.D. '58, winner of the 1980 Pulitzer Prize in history and a member of the Berkeley faculty, "but we've loved you as a comrade." Patrick W. Riddleberger, M.A. '49, Ph.D. '53, recalled how poorly prepared he had been but how he had succeeded because he was forced to perform to Stamppp's high standards. On the other hand, Maizlish and Abzug, students of the 1970s, recalled a more benevolent Stamppp whose mellowing seemed to coincide with his marriage to Isabel. Stamppp, in response, expressed amazement at finding "collapsed in one room" students whose association with him spanned 37 years, calling them "the most remarkable group of people I have known."

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Stamppp earned all of his degrees

at Wisconsin, taking his Ph.D. under William B. Hesseltine. After teaching four years at Maryland, he joined the Berkeley faculty and, in 1957, succeeded John D. Hicks as A. F. and May T. Morrison Professor of History. In the meantime, he was a visiting lecturer at Harvard, a three-time Fulbright lecturer at the University of Munich, a Commonwealth Fund Lecturer at the University of London, a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, and a visiting professor at Colgate. In 1961-62, Stamppp held the coveted position of Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford (which also awarded him an M.A. degree), an appointment accorded only the most distinguished American scholars. Among his awards are two Guggenheims, an honorary L.H.D. from Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and a Silver Medal from the Commonwealth Club of California.

Of Stamppp's many publications, two stand out: *The Peculiar Institution*, written almost three decades ago, remains a standard work on American slavery—complemented, but not superseded; and *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* was such a breakthrough in the revision of the reconstruction period that in April 1965 *Time* magazine featured it in a two-page review. Of the reconstruction revisionists, the reviewer wrote, "Stamppp is easily the most provocative."

Of course, most influential historians are acclaimed not only for their publications, but, perhaps more significantly, for their students who have gone on to establish national reputations. One celebrant noted that



JENNIFER CUBBE

it was not necessary to look any further than the AHA program for the Stamppp imprint. A session on race and politics in the antebellum North was chaired by Litwack, featured papers by Maizlish and William E. Gienapp, Ph.D. '80, and cited the research of Forrest G. Wood, Ph.D. '65. Even the advertisers joined in. Two of the seven books listed in a Random House ad were written by Janet Sharp Hermann, Ph.D. '79, and James P. Oakes, 'Ph.D. '81. While Stamppp expressed relief that "there has never been a Stamppp school of history," even he could not deny that some of his former students are among the most eminent

historians in the United States, claiming a head-spinning number of Guggenheims, Fulbrights, and NEH fellowships.

Meanwhile, Stamppp shows no sign of slowing down. As if to substantiate Maizlish's contention that "we are aiding and abetting statutory retirement," Stamppp continues his research and has been invited back by the history department to teach a course (one of the ways in which the history faculty honors its retired laureates). Perhaps the past preterit *emeritus* after Ken Stamppp's name should be replaced by the present *mereri*.

—Forrest G. Wood

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